The Gatekeeper: Narrative Voice in Plato's Dialogues

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*By*

Margalit Finkelberg

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*FOR ARYEH*

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# Preface

This book grew out of a lifelong fascination with Plato's dialogues as literary fiction. For many years my attitude to Plato was mainly that of an admiring reader, until in 2003 I first gave expression to some of this book's ideas in a paper delivered at a panel on Plato as Literary Author, organized by Ruby Blondell and Ann Michelini at the annual meeting of American Philological Association in New Orleans. There were also other occasions, but it took more than a decade until these initial ideas crystallized into a large-scale project and the study and research of the dialogues began in earnest. This was a hard experience, but fascinating and always rewarding.

I am greatly indebted to the participants in the conference on Framing the Dialogues: How to Read Openings and Closures in Plato, held at the University of Cyprus in December 2015, for their stimulating influence, and I would like to thank Eleni Kaklamanou, Maria Pavlou, and Antonis Tsakmakis for organizing it. I am deeply grateful to Gabriel Danzig for his expert advice, to Aryeh Finkelberg for his helpful and constructive criticism, and to Murray Rosovsky for his dynamic and thoughtful copyediting. I am also grateful to the anonymous reader of my manuscript for his/her encouragement.

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# Abbreviations

| | |
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| *AJP* | *American Journal of Philology* |
| *BICS* | *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* |
| *BMCR* | *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* |
| *CJ* | *Classical Journal* |
| *CQ* | *Classical Quarterly* |
| *CP* | *Classical Philology* |
| *G&R* | *Greece & Rome* |
| *GRBS* | *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* |
| *HThR* | *Harvard Theological Review* |
| *JHS* | *Journal of Hellenic Studies* |
| *NLH* | *New Literary History* |
| *OSAP* | *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* |
| *PCPS* | *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* |
| *Ph&Lit* | *Philosophy and Literature* |
| *PT* | *Poetics Today* |
| *RMM* | *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* |
| *RIPh* | *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* |
| *SSR* | G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae,* collegit, disposuit, apparatibus notisque instruxit G. Giannantoni. Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1990. |
| *TAPA* | *Transactions of American Philological Association* |
| *YCS* | *Yale Classical Studies* |

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CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

## 1 "Diegesis through mimesis": Classification of Narrative Genres in *Republic* 3

In Book 3 of the *Republic*, Plato introduces the first-ever classification of forms of narrative discourse (*diēgēsis*). He proposes the three following categories: (a) the "plain" discourse (*haplē diēgēsis*), which works "through the report (*di' apaggelias*) of the poet himself" and is best exemplified by first-person choral poetry; (b) the mimetic discourse (*hē dia mimēseōs*), which works through impersonation and is best exemplified by dramatic poetry; (c) the "mixed" discourse (*di' amphoterōn*), which employs both mimesis and the voice of the poet himself and is most adequately represented in Homer.[1]

Plato's classification, in the form of an opposition between diegesis and mimesis, has been enthusiastically embraced by contemporary literary theory. Since the Greek *diēgēsis* roughly corresponds to what we today call "narrative,"[2] the opposition in question has been widely used to highlight the distinction between narrative genres (such as the novel) and the non-narrative (such as drama). Paul Ricoeur seems to have been the first to point out that reading *Republic* 3 in terms of an opposition between mimesis and diegesis issues from misconstruction of Plato's original meaning:

> To avoid any equivocation, however, it should be recalled that in the *Republic*, III, 392c, Plato does not oppose diegesis to mimesis. Diegesis is the only generic term discussed. It is divided into "plain" diegesis when the poet narrates events or discourse with his own voice or diegesis "by

1 *Resp*. 392d5–6, 394b9–c5. The discussion of mimesis in Book 10 of the *Republic* addresses both verbal and non-verbal forms of mimesis (such as painting and sculpture), and pursues a different agenda: while *Republic* 3 treats mimesis from the perspective of narrative voice adopted by different forms of discourse, *Republic* 10 explores the ontological status of mimetic art as a whole. For a discussion of *Republic* 10 see Chapter 7.

2 Cf. Halliwell 2009: 18: "I shall employ 'narrative' to designate what Plato's text, at 392d and subsequently, treats as the genus *diēgēsis*, roughly equivalent to temporally plotted discourse."

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> imitation" (*dia mimēseōs*) when the poet speaks as if he were someone else ...[3]

Rather than being opposed to diegesis, mimesis is unambiguously identified by Plato as its subcategory, that is, as a form of narrative. Although in the context of *Republic* 3 the identification is applied to mimetic poetry, it obviously bears on the way Plato's own mimetic compositions should be approached.[4]

As for the mode of presentation, Plato's dialogues fall into three groups:

(a) the narrated dialogues, presented as first-person narratives (the *Lysis*, the *Charmides*, the *Republic*, with the *Parmenides* forming a special case);

(b) the dramatic dialogues, presented as direct speech exchanges (the majority of the corpus);

(c) the so-called mixed dialogues, cast in both direct and reported speech; in these dialogues, the first-person narrative is preceded by a direct speech exchange between the prospective narrator and the prospective narratee (the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, with the *Theaetetus* forming a special case).

Although this grouping of the dialogues bears no relation to the triple classification of narrative genres Plato introduced in *Republic* 3, it has often been approached as such.[5] But the identification is misleading, for Plato never speaks for himself in his dialogues. As L.A. Kosman put it, "in each of them [Plato's dialogues] the narrative voice is itself mimetic."[6] This would eliminate both the "plain" and the "mixed" narrative as classificatory options. Indeed, as Plato's narrator is never identical with the author, his narrated and mixed dialogues should be considered as no less mimetic than the dramatic ones. At the same time, considering that, as we have seen, Plato unambiguously classifies mimetic genres as a subcategory of *diēgēsis*, his dramatic dialogues should be approached as no less diegetic than the narrated ones. Therefore, as far as Plato is concerned, all his dialogues should be identified as belonging to a

3 Ricoeur 1985: 180 n. 39. See also de Jong 1987: 3; Halliwell 2002: 54 n. 42; Morgan 2004: 357–59; Hunter 2004: 24; Halliwell 2009: 18–19.

4 Cf. Halliwell 2009: 21. Mime and the Socratic dialogue were the only genres of prose fiction to exist at the time; both are subsumed under "poetry" in Aristotle's *Poetics*; see further Section 3 below.

5 This tendency can be traced to ancient classifications, see Clay 1992: 116.

6 Kosman 1992: 82. According to Genette (1990: 764–67), dissociation between author and narrator is the primary criterion whereby fiction is distinguishable from non-fiction; cf. Schaeffer 2013: 1 [2]. On the dissociation between author and narrator as "touchstone of fictionality" see also Cohn 1990: 791–800. Cf. Schur 2014: 31, on "the literary face of Plato's discourse – defined as the obverse of authorial discourse, which is a sine qua non for philosophical interpretation," and Schur 2014: 70–73.

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single category, namely, mimetic narrative – or, in Plato's own words, "diegesis through mimesis."[7]

It is worth dwelling at some length on the way Plato's Socrates explains to Adeimantus, his interlocutor in this part of *Republic* 3, how the classification that he has introduced works. In an oft-quoted passage he turns into indirect speech the spoken sections of the Chryses episode in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, the foremost representative of the so-called mixed genre, thereby turning it into "plain discourse" (393d1–394b1). Much less attention, however, has been paid to what immediately follows the passage in question. "Or you may suppose," Socrates tells Adeimantus, "the opposite case – that the intermediate passages in the voice of the poet (*ta tou poiētou ta metaxu tōn rhēseōn*) are omitted, and the exchange of words (*ta amoibaia*) alone is left." "You mean, for example, as in tragedy?" Adeimantus asks, and Socrates replies: "You have conceived my meaning perfectly" (394b3–8, cf. 393b8).

Would Socrates' answer have been different had Adeimantus named the *Sōkratikoi logoi* instead? As the following discussion demonstrates, in the latter case a further qualification, not necessarily literary, would be required. Consider Socrates' specification of the kind of mimetic discourse that will be admitted in the ideal state:

> Suppose, I answered, that a just and good man in the course of a narration (*en tēi diēgēsei*) comes on some saying or action of another good man – I should imagine that he will like to speak in his voice (*apaggellein*), and will not be ashamed of this sort of mimesis: he will be most ready to imitate the good man when he is acting steadfastly and sensibly; in a less degree when he is overtaken by illness or love or drink, or has met with any other mishap. But when he comes to a character which is unworthy of him, he will not wish to apply himself seriously to assuming the likeness (*apeikazein*) of a bad man; he will do such a thing, if at all, for a moment only, when that man is performing some good action, but he will be ashamed of what he is doing, especially as he is not experienced in imitating such persons nor would he like to fashion and frame himself

7 Cf. Morgan 2004: 358: "The only safe conclusion to draw from the passages discussed above [*Republic* 3 and *Theaetetus* 143b-c] is that all Platonic dialogues are conceived as narratives. I propose to adopt the same approach: even dramatic dialogues are by implication narratives." Cf. also Halliwell 2009: 19: "in terms of Socrates' classification, drama is itself a species of narrative *diêgêsis*, i.e. wholly mimetic *diêgêsis* (cf. 394c)." On *Theaetetus* 143b-c see the next section.

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> after the baser models; for his mind despises such things, unless they are being done for the sake of play (*paidias charin*).[8]

Such a reputable imitator would adopt the model of Homer in his narrative (*diēgēsis*), "and his speech (*lexis*) will take part in both, in the mimesis as well as in the other form of narrative (*tēs allēs diēgēseōs*), but there will be very little of the former in a long discourse (*logos*)" (396e4–7). He is the only kind of mimetic artist who will not be expelled from the ideal state:

> For we mean to employ for our benefit the rougher and severer poet or story-teller, who will imitate the speech (*lexis*) of the decent man and will use the discourse (*ta legomena*) which follows the models we prescribed at first when we began the education of our warriors. (398a7–b4)

The explanation is obviously self-referential,[9] but not immediately. Had indeed Socrates authored the *Republic*, the above explanation would have accounted perfectly well for both his position as the dialogue's narrator and the *Republic*'s narrative mode. But it does not account for Plato's position or the narrative mode of the *Republic* as authored by Plato and narrated by Socrates.[10] That is, if Plato had been the dialogue's narrator, then like Homer he would have been speaking in his own voice, mixing "plain narration" (first-person discourse) with purely mimetic passages. But the *Republic*'s narrative voice does not belong to Plato, and this prevents us placing the dialogue with the so-called mixed genres. Plato's position is that of a reputable imitator who in his discourse impersonates another good man, Socrates, and who ought not "be ashamed of this sort of mimesis." Accordingly, the *Republic* can only be approached as "diegesis through mimesis." The same obviously applies to the other narrated dialogues and to the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues.

Still, the classification of narrative genres set out in *Republic* 3 does not sufficiently clarify what precisely Plato had in mind when identifying dramatic

8 *Resp*. 396c5–e2. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Plato are those by Benjamin Jowett, adapted where necessary.

9 Note especially the use of the expression "for the sake of play" (παιδιᾶς χάριν) at 396e2. The expression is repeated verbatim in the *Phaedrus*' programmatic enunciation of the limitations of writing; it is used there to justify the writing of dialogues as a philosopher's pursuit in his leisure time (*Phdr*. 276d2, cf. 276e1–3). Cf. also *Resp*. 602b8: "mimesis is some kind of play rather than serious pursuit (ἀλλ' εἶναι παιδιάν τινα καὶ οὐ σπουδὴν τὴν μίμησιν)." On Plato's concept of *paidia* see below, Chapter 7.

10 Similarly Ferrari 2010: 20–22. But I do not share Ferrari's contention that the *Republic* itself cannot be subsumed under Plato's classification; see below in this chapter.

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genres as narratives. Even more pertinently, it does not clarify how this identification is supposed to work when applied to Plato's own dramatic dialogues. If the dramatic dialogues are to be approached as narratives, whose narratives are they? Ultimately, of course, they are Plato's, but we saw that in the *Republic* a fictional narrator rather than Plato himself delivers the story, as is the case in his other narrated texts. No narrator, however, fictional or not, is explicitly present in the dramatic dialogues. In view of this, should we still follow Plato in blurring the boundary between the narrative and the dramatic discourse? Or should we ignore his formula "diegesis through mimesis" as a purely theoretical exercise? Fortunately, we possess a piece of evidence – a clue, as it were – that allows us to form a clearer idea of how Plato himself would have approached these issues.

## 2 The *Theaetetus* Passage

For Plato's concept of narrative voice overall, *Theaetetus* 143b5–c5 is of utmost importance. A moment before Euclides' slave starts reading aloud his master's account of Socrates' narration of his encounter with Theaetetus, Euclides says to his narratee:

> Here is the roll, Terpsion; in fact, I wrote this account (*logos*) in such a way that Socrates appears in it not as narrating (*diēgoumenon*) to me as he actually did, but as conversing (*dialegomenon*) with those he said he had conversed with – Theodorus the geometer and Theaetetus. And lest in the process of writing I should get into trouble with such intermediary pieces of narrative (*hai metaxu tōn logōn diēgēseis*) like "I said," "I remarked," whenever Socrates speaks of himself, or again, "he agreed," or "he disagreed," whenever he speaks of his interlocutor, I let them converse among themselves, having omitted such pieces altogether.[11]

The passage repeats Plato's proposal, first made in *Republic* 3, to omit the markers of indirect speech[12] thereby turning a narrated piece into a dramatic one, and the dialogue implements it. But it also takes this experiment several steps further.

11 *Tht.* 143b5–c5; my translation.

12 Cf. *Resp.* 394b4 τὰ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τὰ μεταξὺ τῶν ῥήσεων as against *Tht.* 143c1 αἱ μεταξὺ τῶν λόγων διηγήσεις.

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As Gérard Genette has pointed out, the *Theaetetus* passage presents a narrative situation that economizes on at least one narrative level, for the secondary narrative is presented here as the primary one: as a result, the origin of the narration is blurred.[13] To express the fact that, contrary to appearances, the *Theaetetus* narrative belongs to the second rather than the first narrative level (the level that he calls "diegetic"), Genette dubbed this form of narrative "pseudo-diegetic," namely a kind of narrative that occurs when "a narrative second in its origin is immediately brought to the first level."[14]

Genette's analysis of the *Theaetetus*' switch from reported to direct speech underscores the fact that Plato views the distinction between the narrated and the dramatic dialogues as relating less to the mode of narration than to the number of narrative levels that a given dialogue makes explicit. Approaching the *Theaetetus* from the perspective of narrative mode, we would be equally justified in regarding its "pseudo-diegetic" narrative as "pseudo-mimetic," for here a narrated dialogue is disguised as a dramatic one.[15]

But the *Theaetetus* passage does not just concur with *Republic* 3 in pointing out that the dramatic dialogues are to be approached as narratives and demonstrating how the transition from the narrative to the dramatic discourse may be effected; nor does it merely show that the distinction between the narrated and the dramatic dialogues concerns the number of narrative levels they exhibit. The *Theaetetus* passage highlights that insofar as they blur the source of narration, the dramatic dialogues should be regarded as narratives whose narrator is suppressed.

The idea that Genette's pseudo-diegetic narratives should be approached as "narratives with a suppressed narrator" was first expressed by Irene de Jong. She also applied it to a broader corpus of ancient Greek literature:

> In the case of philosophical dialogues and mimetic idylls or eclogues, we are dealing with a suppressed primary narrator, and hence when characters in those poems start narrating they should be considered secondary narrators.[16]

13 Genette 1980: 236–37 (= Genette 1972: 245–46).

14 Genette 1980: 240 (= Genette 1972: 248–49). Cf. Pier 2014: 3.2.2: "a narrative second in origin but which, lacking a diegetic relay, is narrated as though it were diegetic." On Genette's taxonomy of narrative levels see below, Section 5.

15 Cf. Morgan 2004: 358: "The *Theaetetus* thus insists both that the body of the dialogue is a narrative, and presents that narrative as a dramatic conversation." Cf. also de Jong 2014a: 17, and below, with n. 20.

16 De Jong 2014a: 34. Cf. also de Jong 2004: 7–8, 2014b: 3.2.1, and below, n. 3 to Chapter 3.

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At the same time, identifying Socrates of the *Theaetetus* as a suppressed narrator does not do full justice to his role in the dialogue. After all, we have no doubt about the identity of the *Theaetetus*' narrator. Suppressed though he formally is, Socrates is nevertheless indirectly present in the text: he is the dialogue's implicit narrator.

A similar strategy of economizing on a narrative level by presenting in dramatic form what is supposed to be a piece of narrative can also be suggested for the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, negotiated as continuing Socrates' narration in the *Theaetetus*, and for the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*, negotiated as continuing Socrates' narration of what is supposed to be a version of the *Republic* (below, p. 71). Their dramatic form notwithstanding, these dialogues are also presumed to be narratives whose implicit narrator is Socrates. But especially telling is the evidence provided by the *Parmenides*, a dialogue apparently written in close proximity to the *Theaetetus*.[17]

The *Parmenides* is a narrated dialogue arranged as a series of nested boxes; the characters on the bottom level of the narrative, which constitutes the body of the dialogue, are the philosophers Parmenides and Zeno, their host Pythodorus (who narrates the story), and two young men, Socrates and Aristoteles, who have come to Pythodorus' house to listen and talk philosophy with the distinguished guests. Pythodorus' account of the meeting is filtered through two upper-level narrators, Pythodorus' narratee Antiphon and the latter's narratee Cephalus. When the dialogue enters its second quarter, the participants ask Parmenides to demonstrate his method of deduction from a single hypothesis (135d-136e). After some hesitation, Parmenides accepts the challenge, and Aristoteles, the youngest in the company, steps forward to act as Parmenides' respondent: "Ask, and I will answer." "Let us proceed, *he said* (*phanai*): If there is one, the one cannot be many?" (137c2–5; my emphasis). The infinitive *phanai* ("he said"), signaling as it does that we are still within an account of reported speech,[18] is the last indication that the *Parmenides* is a narrated dialogue. From now on, the dialogue proceeds, to all intents and purposes, as a dramatic one.

The *Parmenides*' switch from reported to direct speech, often seen as perplexing, can hardly be anything other than the same strategy of converting a

17 See n. 19 below; on the *Parmenides* see also Chapter 2, pp. 38–44, and Chapter 5, p. 117.

18 Translated literally, it would be something like "he [Pythodorus] said that he [Parmenides] said," presumably spoken by Antiphon. This mode of presentation, resulting in that all the narrative levels are simultaneously present in the narrative, is especially characteristic of the *Symposium*, see Section 5 below. On Antiphon and Pythodorus as narrators see Chapter 2.

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narrated text into a dramatic one that we saw suggested as an experiment in *Republic* 3 and implemented in full in the *Theaetetus*. As R.B. Rutherford put it,

> The longer second part [of the *Parmenides*] is entirely in dialogue, as if Plato had wearied of perpetually repeating "he said" and preferred to focus on the argument. The opening exchange in the *Theaetetus* seems to meet this difficulty.[19]

As with Socrates the narrator of the *Theaetetus*, in the *Parmenides* too Plato suppresses the dialogue's narrator, Pythodorus, who nevertheless continues to be implicitly present in the text as the ultimate source of the narrative.

*Republic* 3, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Parmenides* attest that in Plato's view the difference in presentation between the narrated and the dramatic dialogues does not affect the status of the latter as narratives. For Plato, the only difference between the narrated and the dramatic dialogues is the manner in which they negotiate their narrators: the narrator is explicit in the narrated dialogues and implicit in the dramatic ones. This is as far as Plato's theory goes. The question however is whether Plato's theory agrees with his literary practice.

If Plato conceived of all his dialogues, both the narrated and the dramatic, as narratives, this would impart to his corpus a unity of design that to date has not been explicitly recognized.[20] Yet it is reasonable to suppose that, if indeed Plato understood the dramatic dialogues as narratives with an implicit narrator, this attitude must find its expression not only in the *Theaetetus*, where he openly admits as much, nor only in the *Parmenides*, whose very design leads to this conclusion, but also in the wholly dramatic dialogues. Testing the hypothesis of implicit narrator, as well as its literary and theoretical implications, against the entire corpus of Plato's dialogues is this book's principal objective.

19 Rutherford 1995: 274. Cf. Guthrie 1978: 64: "The *Parmenides* showed a transitional stage, in which the narrative form is tacitly dropped half way through, and it is a fair inference that, as has been assumed on other grounds, it slightly preceded the *Theaetetus*"; Thesleff 1982: 207: "the *Parmenides* … reflects in a significant way the trend towards abandoning the reported form"; Brandwood 1990: 251: "… in the *Theaet.* Plato renounces the use of the reported dialogue form, which seems to be merely an explicit declaration of a practice already implicitly adopted early in the *Parm.* (137c)." On the relative chronology of the two dialogues see Sedley 2004: 16–17, and below, Chapter 5.

20 De Jong remarks on several occasions that, since philosophical dialogues, alongside mimetic idylls or eclogues, can be presented in both dramatic and narrated form, the dramatic variety should also be approached as a narrative, see de Jong 2004: 7–8; 2014a: 17, 34, and above, with n. 16; she does not expound further on these remarks. Morgan 2004 arrives at a similar conclusion on the basis of *Republic* 3 and the *Theaetetus* (see above, with n. 7), but does not expound on it either.

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In the following examination of how Plato negotiates the issue of narrative voice, I shall use the conceptual and analytical apparatus of modern literary theory.

## 3 Plato as Literary Author

Together with tragedy and comedy, dialogue is a distinctive contribution of classical Athens to the set of literary genres at our disposal. Its literariness was recognized as early as Aristotle. Just a few decades after dialogue had appeared on Greek literary scene, Aristotle wrote in the *Poetics*:

> Yet another form of mimesis uses speech (*logoi*) alone, either in prose or in verse … , but until now it has been without a name. For there is no common name we could apply, on the one hand, to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues (*hoi Sōkratikoi logoi*) and, on the other, to mimetic poetry one would compose in iambic, elegiac, or any other meter.[21]

Later in the same passage, Aristotle dismisses the habit of labeling as "poetry" compositions on medicine or natural philosophy only because they happen to be put in verse. He concludes: "and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the meter, so that it would be right to call the one poet (*poiētēs*), the other natural philosopher (*phusiologos*) rather than poet."[22]

Aristotle's assertion that a philosophical dialogue should be considered "poetry," whereas a philosophical poem should not, may well strike us as peculiar. We should, however, take into account that, when discussing "poetry" (*poiēsis*, "making"), Aristotle only had the mimetic variety in mind.[23] Therefore we have good reason to assume that to all intents and purposes Aristotle's "poetry"

21 Arist. *Poet.* 1447a28–b13; tr. S.H. Butcher, slighly adapted. The same or a closely similar view had been expressed by Aristotle in the early dialogue *On Poets*, see Arist. fr. 72 Rose: *logous kai mimēseis* ("pieces of discourse and of mimesis"), relating to the mimes of Sophron and the first Socratic dialogues. See further Haslam 1972; Clay 1994, 34 n.22; Rutherford 1995, 15, 44; Ford 2010.

22 Arist. *Poet.* 1447b17–20. See also *Poet.* 1451b2–3: "The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it."

23 See esp. *Poet.* 1447b14–15 "as if [the poets] are not called poets by virtue of mimesis." It is symptomatic that Aristotle ignores the entire genre of lyric poetry and hardly even mentions the choral odes of tragedy, obviously on account of their non-mimetic character. See further Finkelberg 1998: 10–11, and 2014: 159.

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amounted to what we today call "fiction."[24] The Socratic dialogue, with its mimetic narrative voice (above, with n. 6), also belongs to this category. This is not to say that it is in every respect commensurate with other forms of fiction.

The peculiarity of the philosophical dialogue as a literary genre is that the subject matter that it has to arrange into a "plot" consists of arguments rather than events: it is the arguments that form the dialogue's substance – its "story," as it were.[25] Consider for example the *Symposium*. Apollodorus retells Aristodemus' report about how, years ago, he accompanied Socrates to Agathon's house and joined the party being held there. Yet Agathon's party, for all its ups and downs, is not the "story" of the *Symposium*: it is a framework for the array of arguments communicated in the participants' speeches. It is by means of Plato's skillful handling of this framework that the dialogue's "story" is so structured as to result in a piece of plotted narrative.[26]

Not all Plato's dialogues are as lavishly elaborated as the *Symposium*, but this does not mean that a dialogue whose literary elaboration is minimal will present its arguments in a pure and unalloyed form. The mere presence of Socrates and at least one interlocutor, the bare mention of the spatiotemporal setting which Socrates has come to be associated with, are enough effectively to communicate to the reader that a given piece of prose fiction should be identified as belonging to the genre of Socratic dialogue. "Are you, Alcibiades, on your way to offer a prayer to the god?" "Yes, Socrates, I am." Never mind that *Alcibiades II*, whose opening words I have just quoted, is apparently not authored by Plato: the minimal conditions are fulfilled, and just as with fan fiction the

24 See Laborderie 1978, 53–55; Clay 1994, 23–24; Finkelberg 2014, 158–59. Cf. Finkelberg 1998: 195: "[C]onsistent application of the criterion of mimesis would mean admitting into the realm of poetry the novels of, say, Tolstoy, but excluding from it the poems of, say, Hölderlin." Cf. also McKeon 2002: 30, on "Aristotle's revolutionary simple abstraction 'poetry.'"

25 Here and elsewhere, I use the terms "story" and "plot" in the sense they have acquired in classical anglophone criticism, see e.g. Forster 1972 [1927] or Brooks and Warren 1959 [1943]. Cf. Baldick 2001, s.v. "plot": "the plot is the selected version of events as presented to the reader or audience in a certain order and duration, whereas the story is the full sequence of events as we imagine them to have taken place in their 'natural' order and duration. The story, then, is the hypothetical 'raw material' of events which we reconstruct from the finished product of the plot." On alternative designations of this kind of relationship, such as "fabula" vs. "sujet" or "histoire" vs. "discours," see, e.g., Scheffel 2013: 3.1–3.4.

26 Cf. Kosman 1992: 84: "They [Platonic dialogues] are philosophical dramas in the sense that the action that takes place, that is represented mimetically, is philosophical argument," and Schur 2014: 102: "the main events in Plato's dialogues are acts of speech and argument." Plato's plotting of the dialogues is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

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reader is immediately plunged into the fictional universe of Socratic dialogue and subscribes to its conventions.[27]

Hence it would be incorrect to assume, as Michael Frede did, that "[a]s a rule it is an argument which forms the backbone of the dialogue and gives it its structure."[28] The only group of dialogues to which this assumption may apply are short elenctic dialogues coextensive with a single argument.[29] But even the elenctic *Meno* contains no fewer than four interrelated arguments: the opening discussion of the definition of virtue is followed by a demonstration of the theory of recollection, which is in turn followed by a discussion on whether virtue can be taught, and finally by another, on knowledge and true opinion.[30] The arguments presented in the *Meno* do not determine the structure of the dialogue – rather, the structure of the dialogue as articulated in its conversational dynamics determines the presentation of the arguments.

A standard Platonic dialogue normally comprises more than one argument – some interrelated, others blatantly heterogeneous. The more complex or varied the assemblage of arguments, the more intensive strategies of emplotment will be employed. The arguments may be progressive or circular – as expressed, for example, in the following passage: "And then we got into a labyrinth, and when we thought we were at the end, came out again at the beginning of the search, having still to seek as much as ever."[31] They may contain more than one stage, or several arguments may compete in the same dialogue. To give a few examples, in the *Protagoras* the initial discussion on whether virtue can be taught is followed by three more: – on how virtues are related, on Simonides' poem on virtue, and on pleasure and the good – each presenting a different argument. The heterogeneity of arguments paraded in the *Gorgias*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedrus* is too well known to be dwelt on here. The *Sophist* encompasses two main arguments loosely connected – the search for the definition of the sophist and the inquiry into the nature of not-being, whereas the *Statesman* places under one cover the discussion of method and the discussion of politics. Even the *Theaetetus* with its ostensibly single argument comprises both the exposition of Socrates' maieutic method and the famous

27 Cf. Iser 1993: 12, on the contractual terms involved in the reading of literary texts: "Among the most obvious and the most durable of such signals are literary genres, which have permitted a wide variety of contractual terms between author and reader."

28 M. Frede 1992: 202.

29 The *Ion*, the *Euthyphro*, the *Hippias Major*, the *Hippias Minor*, the *Laches*, the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*. On the structure of the Socratic *elenchus* see Vlastos 1983, M. Frede 1992: 209–12.

30 On the structure of the *Meno* see, e.g., Blössner 2011, and below, pp. 59–60, 127–28.

31 *Euthyd*. 291b7–c2. "Going round and round" is one of Plato's favorite argumentative strategies, see e.g. *Euthyph*. 15b; *Grg*. 517e; *Meno* 74a; *Tht*. 200ab, 209de; *Plt*. 286e.

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Digression, whose relevance to the dialogue's conceptual framework has been debated since antiquity.[32]

What holds the arguments together and consolidates them into one whole is the overarching design of the dialogue, which we have every reason to call its plot.[33] This does not mean that what I refer to as the dialogues' plot cannot be approached as an argument in its own right. But this is not the kind of argument that is cast in words. In the *Symposium*, the sublime last paragraphs of Diotima's speech are followed by a "satyr drama" sparked by Alcibiades' arrival;[34] in the *Phaedrus*, the climactic Palinode is followed by a long discussion on rhetoric and the futility of writing; the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* end with eschatological myths, which invite us to view the dialogues' content from a different angle. It is above all this juxtaposition of parts that turns the design of Plato's dialogues into a communication tool in its own right.[35] We may of course call this juxtaposition an argument, but it would be the same kind of argument that transpires, for example, from the design of the *Iliad* or *Vanity Fair*. As G.R.F. Ferrari put it,

> A reader of the dialogues could derive Plato's philosophic views from the interaction of the characters, from the flow and the outcome of the discussion, could take action and characterization into account, could do all this without ever attributing directly to Plato the arguments of a particular spokesman and still assume that Plato's intention, no less than George Eliot's, was to make his views apparent and to persuade his readers of their validity.[36]

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32 On the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* see Chapters 3 and 6; on the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* see Chapter 3; on the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus* see Chapters 4 and 6.

33 Cf. Bloom 1991: xx: "Every argument must be interpreted dramatically, for every argument is incomplete in itself and only the context can supply the missing links. And every dramatic detail must be interpreted philosophically, because these details contain the images of the problems which complete the arguments. Separately these two aspects are meaningless; together they are an invitation to the philosophic quest."

34 *Symp*. 222d3-4, Socrates to Alcibiades: "This satyric and indeed silenic drama of yours has become manifest (τὸ σατυρικόν σου δρᾶμα τοῦτο καὶ σιληνικὸν κατάδηλον ἐγένετο)." See further Clay 1983: 194; Rutherford 1995: 204–5; Sheffield 2001.

35 See also below, pp. 101–102, on the juxtaposition of the dramatic frame and the framed narrative in the multi-level dialogues.

36 Ferrari 2000. Cf. Griswold 2002: 85: "But the fact of his anonymity as author means that 'Plato's meaning' is not ascertainable in the way that, say, 'Kant's meaning' may be ascertainable in the *Critique of Pure Reason*." For a suggestive parallel between Plato's dialogues and the classical novel see Murley 1955: 287; for a spirited defence of the literary approach to Plato see Schur 2014.

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This is why we can only do justice to both the form and the content of Plato's dialogues if we approach them as works of literature.

## 4 Narrative Voice in Plato's Dialogues

As we have seen, the mimetic character of the Socratic dialogue was sufficient for Aristotle to classify it as a literary genre. The classification as such still stands,[37] and the outstanding literary quality of Plato's dialogues, the most prominent representatives of the genre, is universally recognized. At the same time, the place Plato's dialogues occupy in the history of literature cannot even remotely be likened to their place in the history of philosophy. It would be no exaggeration to say that, outside the field of classical studies, they are hardly visible as works of literary fiction. Let me illustrate my point.

With the advent of narratology, much attention has been paid to such literary strategies as multiple narrative levels, frame narrative, embedded narrative, frame-breaking (metalepsis), and more. Side by side with the study of the ways these strategies have been applied in modern and postmodern fiction, literary scholars frequently refer to their pre-modern and early modern antecedents. The canonical list of the latter consists of *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *The Decameron* – as if the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo*, the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus*, all of them highly sophisticated framed narratives with multiple narrative levels and skillful use of metalepsis, had never been written. The *Wikipedia* entry "Frame Story" enhances the standard list by adding the ancient Egyptian Papyrus Westkar and the *Mahabharata*. Plato's dialogues, again, are conspicuous by their absence.

A notable exception is the founder of narratology Gérard Genette who, as we saw above, uses the *Theaetetus*' switch from the narrative to the dramatic mode as a prototype of pseudo-diegetic narrative.[38] Yet, this is Genette's sole reference to Plato's literary practice. To the best of my knowledge, the only systematic narratological approach to Plato's dialogues is Kathryn Morgan's contribution to a volume purporting to apply the methods of narratology to ancient Greek literature, all of it written by classicists.[39]

37 See, e.g., Baldick 2001, s.v. "dialogue": "a literary form in prose or verse based on a debate or discussion, usually between two speakers." On the "constitutional fictionality" of Plato's dialogues see Cohn 2001: 493.

38 Cf. de Jong 2014a: 17 and 2014b: 3.2.1, and above, Section 2.

39 Morgan 2004; only the narrated dialogues and the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues are discussed. Ferrari 2010, makes effective use of the narratological apparatus in his subtle analysis of the way the narrator is treated in the *Republic*; Collins 2012 and 2015:

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In classical studies proper, attending to literary aspects of Plato's dialogues is of course hardly new. Over the years, not a few readers of Plato, students of philosophy included, have proved acutely aware of his literary strategies and their relevance to the philosophical argument.[40] Recent decades especially, have seen an unprecedented surge of interest in Plato's literariness. Reading Plato's dialogues against the background of Attic drama has become particularly widespread. "Throughout his dialogues, Plato writes with the theater in mind": – this assertion by the author of a recent book neatly reflects the drama-oriented turn in the interpretation of Plato's dialogues.[41] The attention to Plato's dramatic antecedents is, however, only one aspect of a more general phenomenon. Since the 1990s, monographs, articles, collections of essays, and conference proceedings have sparked a stimulating dialogue between philosophy and literature, illuminating such issues as the genre of Socratic dialogue, Plato's literary art, his practices of characterization, possible literary influences on his work, and more.[42]

At the same time, although several recent studies do concentrate on the figure of the narrator, first and foremost Socrates, in Plato's narrated and mixed dialogues,[43] no comprehensive study of narrative voice in Plato's corpus as a whole is to be found. The reason is obvious: it is tacitly assumed that the dramatic dialogues, which constitute most of the corpus, do not lend themselves to being approached in terms of narrative. As we have seen, however, this does not agree with how Plato perceived dramatic texts, including those he himself authored. As *Republic* 3 and the *Theaetetus*, discussed in the first two sections of this chapter, make clear, Plato viewed even the discourse that is presented in dramatic form as a variety of narrative — a narrative whose narrator, though

45–166, applies narratalogical categories, including metalepsis, to the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*; Collobert 2013 proposes a taxonomy of narrative modes and narrators in Plato's dialogues; Kaklamanou and Pavlou 2016 use narratalogical methods in approaching the prologue of the *Theaetetus*. See also Halliwell 2009, for what I see as an unjustifiably negative assessment of the applicability of narratology to Plato's theory and practice.

40 See esp. Taylor 1960 [1926]; Friedländer 1958–69 [1928–1930]; Bloom 1991 [1968]; Guthrie 1975 and 1978; Laborderie 1978.

41 Puchner 2010: 5. On Plato's affiliation with dramatic poetry see esp. Nussbaum 2001[1986], 122–35; Heath 1989: 12–27; Arieti 1991; Nightingale 1995: 60–92, esp. 67–69; Blondell 2002, 1–29; Finkelberg 2006: 67; Charalabopoulos 2012, but see already D. Tarrant 1955.

42 General: Rutherford 1995, Kahn 1996, Griswold 2002, Michelini 2003, Erler 2006, Rowe 2007, McCabe 2008, Capuccino 2014, Schur 2014, Fritz 2016, but see already Thesleff 1967, Laborderie 1978; genre: Clay 1994, Kahn 1996: 1–35, Ford 2010, Rossetti 2011 [2003], cf. Laborderie 1978: 43–51; characterization: Blondell 2002, Cotton 2014; literary influences: Clay 1994, Nightingale 1995, Ford 2008, Capra 2014, cf. Laborderie 1978: 13–43.

43 Morgan 2004; Bowery 2007; Ferrari 2010; Schultz 2013; but see already Murley 1955.

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suppressed, is nevertheless implicitly present in the text. However, Plato's concept of narrative voice that transpires from *Republic* 3 and the *Theaetetus* has never been tested against his own literary practice. The present book is an attempt to fill this gap.

The book falls into two parts. Part One offers a close reading of the narrator's text and its equivalents in Plato's narrated, dramatic, and mixed dialogues. I shall start with an analysis of the narrated dialogues, the only group whose narrator is explicit all along (Chapter 2). Though not numerous, the narrated dialogues are instrumental in providing us with a reliable set of criteria which allow us to map the way Plato negotiates the figure of the narrator – his functions, his manifestations, the scope of his authority. The analysis leads to the conclusion that Plato's narrator is thoroughly defined in terms of perception and knowledge. The narrator is he who focalizes the story in its entirety to the exclusion of any other character; as a result, the dialogue is permanently filtered through the narrator's individual perception.

The results obtained for the narrated dialogues serve as the basis for approaching the dramatic dialogues, the largest group in the corpus (Chapter 3). Applying to the dramatic dialogues the same criteria whereby the narrator of the narrated dialogues has been identified shows that, except for three dialogues (the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus*), all Plato's dramatic dialogues exhibit a single focus of perception regularly associated with one of the characters. This allows us to suggest that these dramatic dialogues are conceived as narratives whose narrator is implicitly present in the text. Like the explicit narrator of the narrated dialogues, the implicit narrator of the dramatic dialogues is construed as the first-person narrator who focalizes the dialogue in its entirety.

The results of the analysis of both the narrated and the dramatic dialogues will be further applied to the mixed dialogues, the most structurally complex group in the corpus (Chapter 4). Since the mixed dialogues share their characteristics with both the dramatic and the narrated ones, the principles on whose basis these two groups have been approached will be applied to the respective parts of the mixed dialogues as well. The mixed dialogues' multi-level structure will also be analyzed in detail; special emphasis will be placed on Plato's strategies of metalepsis, or breaking the boundaries between different narrative levels.

Part Two is devoted to synthesis and interpretation. In Chapter 5, I shall try to identify Plato's major contributions to the poetics of narrative voice and to map their diachrony. In a sense, Plato's entire literary career can be presented as a series of attempts to replace the literary form of narrated dialogue (which he apparently inherited from his predecessors) with that of dramatic

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dialogue (which he apparently introduced himself) – yet without abandoning the latter's identification as a form of narrative. It seems to follow that Plato strived for his dialogues to behave like narratives without looking like them. To achieve this goal he eventually abandoned the explicit narrator, but kept the signals of his authority intact. It was obviously important to him that his dialogues be filtered through a single focus of perception. This key role has been delegated by him to the implicit narrator.

In more than one sense, the two concluding chapters stand apart from the rest, in that they depart from the discussion of narrative voice in the strict sense of the word. In Chapter 6, I shall try to outline the scope of the authority at the narrator's disposal by following material manifestations of narrative voice and delineating their role in the dialogues' structure. This leads to the conclusion that, although the authority vested in Plato's narrator is far from negligible, it does not spread onto the plot of the dialogue. The latter is crafted by the author, whose authority lies beyond the narrator's domain. To illustrate how the narrator's text behaves in the context of the dialogue as a whole, three dialogues (the *Lysis*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Phaedo*) are analyzed in detail.

Finally, proceeding from the renewed discussion of mimesis introduced in Book 10 of the *Republic*, I shall try to define the narrator's place in the fictional universe created by the author and the nature of the relationship between the two (Chapter 7). The author fashions a plotted narrative out of the arguments he purports to exhibit: he is the demiurge of a fictional universe. Yet, the reader can only enter this universe through the narrator's mediation. The narrator is the dialogue's gatekeeper, a filter through whose agency it is communicated to the reader. His main function is to control the way the dialogue is presented to the reader by sustaining a certain perspective of it. There is little room to doubt whose perspective it ultimately is.

## 5 Plato's Narrator and Narrative Theory: Some Necessary Adjustments

Throughout this book I approach the issue of narrative voice in Plato's dialogues from the standpoint of classical and post-classical narratology, with special emphasis on such topics as narrative levels, focalization, narrative frame, and metalepsis. Let me start by clarifying the principal concepts involved.

I use the term *extradiegetic* to designate the narrator and narrative situation located outside the narrated world, and the term *intradiegetic*, or *diegetic*, to designate the narrator and narrative situation located within the narrated

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world.[44] To designate the second- and third-degree narratives located below the first intradiegetic level, I use the terms "second intradiegetic level," "third intradiegetic level," and so forth, thus replacing, for clarity, both Genette's "metadiegetic" and the later "hypodiegetic" alike.[45]

Discussing the narrator's relation to the narrated story, I use the term *heterodiegetic* to designate a narrator who is not a character in the story, and the term *homodiegetic* to designate a narrator who is one of the story's characters.[46] Finally, I use the terms *autodiegetic narrator* or alternatively *narrator-hero* to designate such a homodiegetic narrator who is at the same time the story's main character, and the term *narrator-observer* to designate such a homodiegetic narrator who, although present in the story, is not its main character.[47]

At the same time, when applied to Plato's dialogues, some narratological concepts prove more applicable than others, and not a few require further adjustment. The following points seem to be of special relevance to the present discussion.

### 5.1 *Narrative Levels and Homodiegetic Narrator*

The narratee, namely, the reader or listener to whom the narrative is addressed, is by definition placed outside the world of the narrated story; hence the level at which the narrative act is positioned will always lie beyond the story's boundaries. As John Pier put it, "every narrative, beginning with the first-level narrative, is produced by an act of narration which is of necessity external to that level."[48]

In the case of the primary narrator, the level at which both the narrator and the narratee are positioned will be external to the narrative as a whole. In other words, the primary narrator and the narrative act in which he or she is involved are extradiegetic by definition. In Genette's words,

44 Genette 1980: 228–29.

45 Genette 1980: 228–29; Bal 1981: 41–43; cf. Baldick 2001: s.v. "diegesis."

46 Genette: 1980: 244–45. The alternative terms "external narrator" and "internal, or character-bound, narrator" are also being used in scholarly literature; see Bal 1997 [1985]: 21–23; de Jong 2014a: 19. In the amendment of Genette's taxonomy proposed by Wolf Schmid, Genette's "extradiegetic-heterodeigetic narrator" would correspond to "primary non-diegetic narrator," the "extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator" to "primary diegetic narrator," the "intradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator" to "secondary non-diegetic narrator," and so on. See Schmid 2008: 89; cf. Pier 2014: 3.1.1.

47 Genette 1980: 245, 248.

48 Pier 2014: 2.

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> M. de Renoncourt and Crusoe are authors-narrators, and as such they are at the same narrative level as their public – that is, as you and me.[49]

Furthermore, while the identity of the primary narrator may or may not be made known to the reader, the identity of his or her narratee and of the narrative situation in which the primary narrator and narratee are involved is normally not made manifest. To quote Genette again,

> The extradiegetic narrator, on the other hand, can aim only at an extradiegetic narratee, who merges with the implied reader and with whom each real reader can identify. This implied reader is in principle undefined.[50]

However, in multi-level narratives we also encounter narrators who tell their stories from within the narrative: while they too are positioned at a different level than that of the stories they deliver, such narrators will be fully enclosed by the fictional universe (intradiegetic narrator). Accordingly, their intradiegetic narratees will not merge with the implied reader or listener:

> To an intradiegetic narrator corresponds an intradiegetic narratee…
> We, the readers, cannot identify ourselves with those fictive narratees anymore than those intradiegetic narrators can address themselves to us, or even assume our existence.[51]

Now, since the only model of narrator that Plato employs is that of the first-person narrator who is also one of the characters in the story (homodiegetic narrator), Plato's narrator, both the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic, finds himself in an ambivalent position. Since the extradiegetic first-person narrator addresses the dialogue's implied reader, he is positioned outside the narrated world; on the other hand, since the first-person narrator – or, more precisely, his earlier self – is also one of the characters in the story, he is positioned within the narrated world:

> M. de Renoncourt as the "author" of the *Mémoirs* is extradiegetic: although fictive, he addresses the actual public, just like Rousseau or Michelet; the same Marquis as hero of the same *Mémoirs* is diegetic, or intradiegetic …[52]

49 Genette 1980: 229; see also Schmid 2008: 86–95. Marquis de Renoncourt is the fictional narrator of the seven-volume *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité* by Abbé Prévost, the final volume of which contains the story of the Chevalier des Grieux and Manon Lescaut.

50 Genette 1980: 260.

51 Genette 1980: 259–60.

52 Genette 1980: 229.

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By the same token, the intradiegetic first-person narrator will belong to two intradiegetic levels: that of the narrative act in which he is involved and that of the narrative which he delivers and which features his former self as one of the characters. This double position, aptly conveyed through Wolf Schmid's distinction between "the narrating self" and "the narrated self,"[53] accounts for every single narrative situation in which Plato's narrator is involved.

### 5.2 *The First-Person Narrator and Focalization*

As I argue in this book, owing to his ambivalent position as outlined above, the first-person narrator of Plato's dialogues adopts the point of view of his former self as a character in the story: that is, he both narrates and focalizes the story.[54] Such merging of the homodiegetic narrator and the source of focalization would be at variance with the rigorous separation between narration and focalization pursued in classical narratology.[55] However, in that it eliminates the difference between the omniscient third-person narrator and his first-person counterpart,[56] the separation in question proves difficult in more than one respect. Since knowledge of the first-person narrator is necessarily limited by the personal experience acquired by his former self, his relation to focalization can hardly be identical to that of the omniscient narrator.

At the same time, the merging of first-person narration and focalization squares very well indeed with the re-assessment of the focalizing role of the first-person narrator that took place in post-Genettian theory. To quote William F. Edmiston,

> The FPN [first-person narrator] may efface all temporal distance and adopt the intradiegetic vision of the hero, who presents his own mental activity and his view of others at the moment of event.[57]

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53 Schmid 2008: 86–87: "erzählendes Ich" and "erzähltes Ich."

54 "Focalization, a term introduced by Genette (1972), may be defined as a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld" (Niederhoff 2011a: 1.2). The introduction of the term "focalization" was purported to replace such relatively vague categories as "perspective" and "point of view."

55 As epitomized, e.g., in Baldick 2001: s.v. "focalization": "The nature of a given narrative's focalization is to be distinguished from the narrative 'voice,' as seeing is from speaking."

56 As made explicit, e.g., in Genette 1980 [1972]: 194; Bal 1997 [1985]: 158; Rimmon-Kenan 2002 [1983]: 75. For a criticism see Shen 2003.

57 Edmiston 1989: 742. Cf. ibid. 742–43: "When the FPN speaks about past events and characters from his present vantage point, he is temporarily and spatially external to his story. He knows more now than he did then, and he is less involved now than he was then. He is perceptually limited nonetheless because he continues to be a part of the same world in which he lived as the hero."

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Ansgar Nünning elaborates on the relation between "the narrating I" and "the narrated I" in first-person narratives:

> First-person narratives usually involve two main perspectives: the narrator-perspective represents the private domain of the homodiegetic narrator, whose worldview is conditioned by the knowledge, psychological dispositions, attitudes, and values of the narrating "I." Telling the story in retrospect and knowing its outcome, the narrating I has a wider perspective than the narrated or experiencing I, who previously inhabited the time and space of the story level. Since the first-person narrator remembers what the narrated I knew, experienced, thought, and felt, the character-perspective of the experiencing I is embedded in the cognitive domain of the narrating I.[58]

As we shall see, this assessment will adequately account for the position of narrator in Plato's dialogues.

### 5.3 *Zooming-in*

One of Plato's principal strategies of focalization is to open a dialogue with the narrator's gradually focusing his attention on a certain, not yet sufficiently identified, object, person or theme, and acquiring fuller knowledge of it at the end of the process. Such gradual focalization is nothing other than "zooming-in," a narrative technique attested as early as Homer. This is how Irene de Jong describes its being applied at *Odyssey* 9.166–223, Odysseus and his men focalizing the cave of the Cyclops:

> …we gradually get closer to the Cyclops' cave, following the pace of the Greeks' focalization. First, standing on Goat-Island, they see smoke and hear sheep and goat bleating (166–7). Then, from the coast where they have landed, they see the outside of the cave and the yard in front of it (182–92. …). Finally, they arrive at the cave and admire its interior (216–23).[59]

58 Nünning 2001: 218. Cf. Niederhoff 2011b: 3.2 [28]: "After all, it [Genette's separation of narrators and focalizations] makes sense only if narrators and perspectives are distinct categories, in other words if the choice of a particular kind of narrator does not entail a particular perspective." See also Phelan 2001; Fludernik 2001a, 2001b.

59 De Jong 2001: 235. Cf. de Jong 2001: 139, on Odysseus approaching the Land of the Phaeacians. For an overview see de Jong 2001: 70.

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The zooming-in that de Jong describes is instrumental in the building of suspense toward the meeting with the Cyclops, which culminates in the latter's arrival (233–51).

As far as I can see, the closest Platonic parallel to Homer's episode would be the *Euthydemus* description of Crito's two-stage focalization, first from afar and then through a first-hand report, of Socrates' encounter with the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (below, p. 85). The dialogue, however, is a literary genre committed to the dynamics of conversation, so that in Plato's dialogues zooming-in normally proceeds as a series of questions posed by the narrator, thus taking the form of gradual absorption of information by both the narrator and the reader. Such gradual absorption of information may be further compared to what Genette refers to as "initial 'ignorance,'" which "has become a topos of novellistic beginning."[60]

### 5.4 *Narrative Frame and Frame Narrator*

The Platonic corpus has six multi-level dialogues, each containing at least one frame story and therefore featuring more than one narrator.[61] Thus, the primary narrator of the *Parmenides*, Cephalus, delivers a story from which he himself is absent; only when we arrive at the third intradiegetic level does Pythodorus, a narrator who is also a character in the story, emerge (Chapter 2). At the same time, the primary narrator delivers a story of his own, which is the dialogue's frame story. Genette's taxonomy treats the two kinds of narrator as equal in status, so that the same criteria are applied to both. But it would be counter-intuitive to give equal weight to the narrative of Cephalus, who relates how he met the prospective narrator of the story about Socrates' encounter with Parmenides, and the narrative of Pythodorus, who tells the story itself. Although formally equivalent in that each represents a separate narrative level, the significance of the frame is not equivalent to the significance of the narrative it encloses.

As Monika Fludernik has pointed out, classical narratology makes no provision for narrative situations that involve frame narratives:

> Unlike the story-within-the-story, the specific structure of frame narrative, on the other hand, is never properly caught in these mathematical outlines. Although, technically speaking, a similar relation of embedding obtains, the constitution of stereotypical frame narrative needs to be

60 Genette 1980: 191 n. 53. Genette brings the openings of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimental* and Zola's *Germinal* as representative examples. He claims that the rule no longer operates in Henry James, but see the first chapter of *The Portrait of a Lady*, where the identity of the characters participating in the opening scene is only gradually disclosed.

61 The *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus*.

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> connected with a proportional factor relating to frame's length and significance. However structurally it is the case that both in a frame narrative and in an embedded narrative a character tells a story, usually in the setting of a frame narrative the framing primary story is quite marginal in relation to the embedded story, which takes up most of the text.[62]

To distinguish these two categories of narrator, I shall refer to the narrator who appears in the dialogue's frame story as "frame narrator."

### 5.5 *Metalepsis*

Metalepsis, or frame-breaking, is a narratological concept purporting to account for the literary strategy of transgressing the boundaries between different narrative levels. It was first identified by Genette, who defined it as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse."[63] Owing to the pioneering studies of Irene de Jong and Tim Whitmarsh, the use of metalepsis in Greco-Roman literature has recently drawn considerable scholarly attention.[64] Surprisingly therefore the application of this narrative strategy in Plato's dialogues has largely passed unnoticed. This seems to be mainly due to the way metalepsis is employed by Plato.

First, the form of metalepsis most widespread in contemporary fiction, hence most frequently discussed, concerns the breaking of artistic illusion issuing from intrusion of the real world into the fictional one or vice versa; in narratological terms, this would amount to breaking the boundary between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic level of narrative. In equal measure, however, metalepsis can occur between different intradiegetic levels, that is, between the narrative frame and the story it encloses. As it happens, this is precisely the type of metalepsis that Plato favored.[65]

62 Fludernik 1996: 257. Fludernik's conclusion is that "the situation is methodologically intractable, at least within a structuralist methodology" (ibid.).

63 Genette 1980: 234–35; on "metadiegetic" see above, with n. 45. See also Genette 2004; Cohn 2005; Ryan 2006: 204–11; Pier 2013; Hanebeck 2017. For a discussion of various types of metalepsis see Fludernik 2003: 382–89; for examples of metalepsis in Homer and other early poetry see de Jong 2009 and 2014a: 41–42; for metalepsis in Plato see Collins 2012: 163–73; 2015: 124–33; Finkelberg, forthcoming, and below, Chapter 5.

64 De Jong 2009; Whitmarsh 2013. A conference on Metalepsis in Classical Literature took place in Oxford in September 2015; as far as I know, metalepsis in Plato was not among the subjects discussed.

65 Metalepsis that involves the extradiegetic level occurs only in two dialogues – the *Charmides* and the *Republic*, both of them having only one intradiegetic level (below, pp. 34, 37).

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Second, in most cases metalepsis in Plato does not affect the plot level: what we have instead is so-called rhetorical metalepsis.[66] From apostrophic addresses to the audience in the *Charmides*, the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo* (below, pp. 33–34, 82–83, 89n33) to short asides in the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, and the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo* again (37, 95, 82–83, 89–90), rather more often than not metalepsis in Plato (to borrow Marie-Laure Ryan's characterization of rhetorical metalepsis)

> opens a small window that allows a quick glance across levels, but the window closes after a few sentences, and the operation ends up reasserting the existence of boundaries.[67]

Third, in the multi-level *Symposium* and *Parmenides* Plato's use of a two-tier system of reported speech results in the frame narrator permanently intruding into the narrated world (below, pp. 43, 96). Although no frame-breaking in the strict sense of the word is involved, the ensuing intermingling of different narrative levels is not unlike that of "metaleptic contamination" characteristic of ontological metalepsis (metalepsis at the plot level) (cf. Chapter 4, with n. 24). Unattainable by modern languages and lost in translation, this metaleptic strategy is without parallel in modern fiction and has passed unnoticed as a result.[68]

It is only in the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* that metalepsis acts as an inseparable part of the plot. As far as I can see, both cases closely parallel metaleptic practices of modern fiction (cf. below, pp. 114–15); still, J.J. Collins (n. 63 above) seems to have been the only one to acknowledge the presence of metalepsis in these two dialogues. The role of metalepsis in the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### 5.6 *Emplotment*

As John Pier has pointed out, the absence of the Aristotelian principle of plot is a distinctive feature of Genette's narratalogical model, which is focused on modality and voice:

> As his [Genette's] definitions of "story" and "narrative" show, the assimilation of narrative content and narrative text into concepts of structural

66 To be distinguished from ontological metalepsis, see further Cohn 2005; Ryan 2006: 204–11; Pier 2013: 2.1 [7].

67 Ryan 2006: 207.

68 This, of course, does not mean that the effect as such has not been described or commented on; see, e.g., the comments of Halperin and Hunter adduced in Chapter 4 (with n. 50).

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> linguistics shifts the focus away from the notion of plot. … Nowhere in *Narrative Discourse*, however, is there a mention of "plot," or *mûthos*.[69]

We shall see, however, that the question of who, the narrator or the author, is envisaged as responsible for the dialogues' plot is essential in assessing the narrator's role in Plato's dialogues. That is why in Chapter 6, which deals with the material manifestations of narrative voice and their plot-building function, I turn to the strategies of emplotment as evinced in the work of Peter Brooks and Paul Ricouer. The assumption from which I proceed is that, by following what Ricoeur defined as "mise en intrigue" ("emplotment") and Brooks as "plotting," or "the moments where we seize the active work of structuring revealed or dramatized in the text,"[70] one can obtain a deeper insight into the dialogues' design and the response they were intended to produce. The overarching approach, however, remains the same, and it can be formulated as follows: whatever methodology is used, it is above all the very fact of inquiry into the literary strategies by means of which Plato presented his arguments that effectively bridges what is still often perceived as a gap between philosophy and literature in Plato's oeuvre and, as a result, allows us to approach his dialogues as integral wholes.

69 Pier 2008: 119. Cf. also ibid.: 116–17: "In this narratology geared to 'discourse' rather than to the 'story' (cf. Bremond's *récit racontant* as opposed to *récit raconté*) or, in Genette's terms, a 'modal narratology' ('analysis of narrative as a mode of representation of "stories," ruling out drama, for example'), narrative is considered the 'expansion of a verb.'" On the vexed question as to whether drama should be regarded as a subdivision of narrative see Jahn 2001; Fludernik 2008; Nünning 2008; Hühn and Sommer 2013: 3.2; Klauk and Köppe 2014.

70 Ricouer 1984 [1983]: 31–51; Brooks 1992 [1984]: 35. The two terms were introduced almost simultaneously to give expression to the dynamic aspect of plot, cf. Brooks 1992 [1984]: 14: "Ricoeur's emphasis on the constructive role of plot, its active, shaping function, offers a useful corrective to the structural narratologists' neglect of the dynamics of narrative and points us toward the reader's vital role in the understanding of plot." On emplotment in contemporary narratology see Abbot 2011; Scheffel 2013; Kukkonen 2014.

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# PART 1

## *The Dialogues*

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CHAPTER 2

# The Explicit Narrator: Narrated Dialogues

## 1 Introducing the Narrated Dialogues

The Platonic corpus contains four narrated dialogues: the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, the *Republic*, the *Parmenides*. They form a fairly homogeneous group. Their narrator is explicitly presented as the first-person narrator, who may or may not be Socrates,[1] and each opens with an introductory episode of two clearly articulated stages.

– In the *Charmides*, Socrates narrates how, (I) having returned from the army at Potidaea, he entered the palaestra of Taureas where he met Chaerephon and Critias, and how (II) they introduced to him the beautiful Charmides on the latter's arrival; this is followed by Socrates' report of the conversation that developed as a result of the encounter.
– In the *Lysis*, Socrates narrates how (I) on his way from the Academy to the Lyceum he encountered Ctesippus and Hippothales, and how (II) they led him to a newly established palaestra, where the boys Lysis and Menexenus were introduced to him; this is followed by Socrates' report of the conversation that developed as a result of the encounter.
– In the *Republic*, Socrates narrates how, (I) having arrived in the Piraeus in order to attend the festival of the goddess Bendidea, he and Glaucon ran into Polemarchus and a group of friends and were invited to join them in Polemarchus' house, and how (II) arriving there, they met other people, including the rhetorician Thrasymachus; this is followed by Socrates' report of the conversation that developed as a result of the encounter.
– In the *Parmenides*, Cephalus of Clazomenae narrates how (I) on arriving in Athens he and his compatriots met Glaucon and Adeimantus in the Agora, and how (II) these two took them to the estate of their half-brother Antiphon; this is followed by Antiphon's rehearsal of Pythodorus' story about Socrates' encounter with the philosophers Parmenides and Zeno.

1 Socrates also appears as the explicit narrator in the narrated parts of the mixed *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus*; in the spurious *Rival Lovers*, *Axiochus* and *Eryxias*, as well as in the fragmentary *Alcibiades* and *Miltiades* of Aeschines. The *Parmenides* and the narrated parts of the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium* are delivered by other first-person narrators. In Xenophon's dialogues the explicit first-person narrator is always anonymous.

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Note that the transition from one stage to the other involves not only a spatial change (the *Charmides* being the only exception) and modification in the cast of characters, but also results in the introduction of the principal interlocutor or, in the case of the *Parmenides*, the narrator of the main story. Charmides, Lysis, Thrasymachus, Antiphon – all characters whose presence makes the ensuing conversation possible – only appear at the second stage. As we shall see immediately, such gradual unveiling of information ("zooming-in;" see above, pp. 20–21) is inextricably connected with the way the issue of narrative voice is approached in Plato's dialogues.

As for the closures, the *Lysis* and the *Charmides* bring the story back to the original act of narration, more precisely, to its second stage: the tutors of Lysis and Menexenus arrive and interrupt their conversation with Socrates; the discussion between Socrates and Charmides comes to an end. The *Republic* and the *Parmenides* end abruptly, although at the end of its penultimate book the *Republic* supplies what looks like a formal closure.[2]

Plato was most probably not the first to compose narrated dialogues.[3] Consider, for example, the following fragment from the *Alcibiades*, a lost dialogue by the prominent Socratic writer Aeschines of Sphettus:

> We were seated on the benches of the Lyceum, where the judges organize the games,

or a more substantial one from the *Miltiades* by the same author:

> It happened to be a Great Panathenaic procession, and we were seated in the porch of Zeus the Liberator – myself, Hagnon the father of Theramenus, and the poet Euripides – and … Miltiades approached us, seemingly on purpose.[4]

In both cases Socrates is the speaker, and the setting is highly reminiscent of the openings of Plato's *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, and the *Republic*. The story's presentation however is not nearly as elaborate as what we find in Plato: neither the two-stage exposition nor the gradual intensifying of suspense, both eventually

2 Cf. Annas 1981: 335: "Book 9 ends the main argument of the *Republic*, and ends it on a rhetorical and apparently decisive note;" similarly Halliwell 1997: 325. Contra Burnyeat 1997: 288–92; Schur 2014: 73.

3 Thesleff 1982: 199–210. Cf. Tarrant 2000: 217 n. 5: "other Socratics are likely to have anticipated Plato in the use of 'narrated' dialogue." On the argument of Aeschines' priority see now Pentassuglio 2017. On Plato and the "invention" of dialogue see also Chapter 3, Section 1.

4 *SSR* VI A 43 = Demetr. *Eloc*. 205; tr. C.H. Kahn; *SSR* VI A 76 = *P. Oxy*. 2889; my translation.

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focusing on Socrates' principal interlocutor (the zooming-in technique), are to be found here. Likewise the opening of the pseudo-Platonic *Eryxias*:

> I happened to be strolling about the Stoa of Zeus the Liberator with Eryxias, from the deme Stiria, when Critias and Erasistratus … came up to us. Erasistratus, it turned out, was just recently back from Sicily…[5]

A degree of sophistication more closely resembling Plato's narratives can be found in the opening of Xenophon's *Symposium*, a dialogue that, like all Socratic writings of Xenophon, was probably influenced by Plato and other Socratics.[6] It is indeed difficult to avoid the impression that the way Xenophon introduces the setting in this dialogue is modeled on the opening of Plato's *Republic*:

> It was horse-race day at the Great Panathenaea. Callias son of Hipponicus happened to be courting Autolycus, a boy who had just won the pancration, and Callias had brought him to see the race. When it was over, he set off for his house in the Piraeus taking both Autolycus and the boy's father with him, and Niceratus went with him as well. Then Callias noticed Socrates, Critobulus, Hermogenes, Antisthenes and Charmides in a group together. He arranged for someone to take the Autolycus party on and then went across to the Socrates group himself…[7]

Just like Polemarchus in the *Republic*, Callias meets Socrates in the street and manages to bring him and his companions to his house in the Piraeus, where the conversation takes place. But, as distinct from Plato, whose Polemarchus sends a slave to catch Socrates and make him wait for him, Xenophon, in what is probably a deliberate criticism of Plato, makes his Callias approach Socrates in person.[8]

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5 *Eryx*. 392a; tr. Mark Joyal; the dialogue was considered inauthentic already in antiquity, see Diog. Laert. 3.62. On the dubious and spurious dialogues and their position in the Platonic corpus see Joyal 2014: 73–81.

6 Aeschines, Plato and Xenophon were approximately of the same age, yet given the circumstances of Xenophon's life it is reasonable to suppose that he started writing about Socrates considerably later than the other Socratics. cf. Kahn 1996: 29–30, Huss 1999: 15–18, but see already Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1920: 23. For a more nuanced approach see Danzig 2018.

7 Xen. *Symp*. 2–3; tr. A.J. Bowen. The opening of the *Republic* is quoted below in this chapter, see pp. 34–35.

8 Similarly Huss 1999: 78; cf. Danzig 2017: 133. Callias son of Hipponicus was one of the wealthiest people in fifth-century Athens. Friend and follower of the Sophists, he appears as their host in Plato's *Protagoras* (below, Chapter 4); he also emerges in Plato's *Apology*,

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As in the *Republic* again, the opening consists of two stages, and the transition from one to the other involves a spatial change. However, contrary to Plato, Xenophon does not exploit the narrative potential of the patterns he employs. Neither the build-up of suspense nor the gradual concentration on the main interlocutor will be found here. The same persons are present at each stage of the exposition: as a result, the brisk narrative progression, a hallmark of Plato's openings, is irrevocably lost.

The two-stage openings of the pseudo-Platonic *Rival Lovers* and *Axiochus*, though not as static as what we find in Xenophon, also fall short of the openings of the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, or the *Republic*. The *Rival Lovers* handles rather ineffectively the *Charmides*-inspired description of Socrates' enthusiasm at the sight of the beauty of the two boys he met in the class of the grammarian Dionysius (133a). First, as distinct from Charmides of Plato's *Charmides* or from Lysis and Menexenus of the *Lysis* (below, Section 3), the boys of the *Rival Lovers* are present on the stage from the very beginning, so that the zooming-in effect that could be produced by their entrance is lost. Second and more important, not the two boys but their two admirers are the focus of the dialogue, which makes Socrates' enthusiasm somewhat misplaced: instead of drawing the reader's attention to the dialogue's subject, it draws it away from it. In the *Axiochus*, whose opening, as in Xenophon, involves a spatial change, no effort is made to build up narrative suspense around Cleinias breaking the news that his father Axiochus lies on his deathbed (364a-b) or around Socrates' meeting with the dying man (365a-b).

We can conclude, therefore, that even if Plato was neither the first nor the only one to write narrated dialogues, he took this genre in directions not envisaged by his predecessors or easy to imitate. This was recognized already in antiquity. Thus, after mentioning other candidates for the title of inventor of dialogue, Diogenes Laertius wrote:

> In my opinion Plato, since he brought this form to the point of perfection, should deservedly take first prize for both the beauty and the invention.[9]

The impression that Plato's dialogues have made on ancient and modern readers is to a considerable extent due to his skillful use of the narrative voice.

in Aeschines' *Callias* and *Aspasia*, in Xenophon's *Hellenica*, in Andocides, Lysias, Antiphon, in Aristophanes' *Frogs* and other Attic comedy, see Nails 2002: 68–74. On Polemarchus see below, n. 21; on Hermogenes see 58n26.

9 Diog. Laert. 3.48; my translation. On Plato's reputation as a writer and the extent of his literary influence in antiquity see Hunter 2012.

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While the *Charmides*, the *Lysis* and the *Republic,* delivered by a single narrator, possess only one intradiegetic level, the *Parmenides* is a multi-level dialogue introducing three successive narrators. In other words, we have here two different types of narrative, which should be approached separately.

## 2 A Single Narrator (the *Charmides*, *Lysis*, *Republic*)

### 2.1 *The Charmides and the Lysis*

The narrative and the narrator of these two dialogues are negotiated in a closely similar way.[10]

#### 2.1.1 Narrator-Hero

Everything we encounter in the narrated world of the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* is seen through Socrates' eyes. No alternative source of perception is available. This means that the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* are thoroughly focalized through the first-person narrator who is also a character in the story (the homodiegetic narrator; cf. above, p. 17); in the two dialogues under consideration, the narrator is the story's leading character (the autodiegetic narrator, or the narrator-hero).

In the dialogues' two-stage openings, Socrates' perception is mobilized to focus the reader's attention on the conversation's setting and participants. At the first stage the setting is introduced:

> Yesterday evening, I returned from the army at Potidaea… I went into the palaestra of Taureas, which is over against the temple adjoining the porch of King Archon, and there I found a number of persons, most of whom I knew, but not all.[11]
>
> I was going from the Academy straight to the Lyceum, intending to take the outer road, which is close under the wall. When I came to the postern gate of the city, which is by the fountain of Panops, I fell in with Hippothales, the son of Hieronymus, and Ctesippus the Paeanian, and a company of young men who were standing with them.[12]

10 For a detailed analysis of the plot structure of the *Lysis* see Chapter 6.

11 *Chrm.* 153a1–6.

12 *Ly.* 203a1–5. Ctesippus is also a character in the *Euthydemus*; he was present at the death of Socrates; see *Phd.* 59b9. Very little is known of Hippothales. See further Nails 2002: 119–20, 174.

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After the setting has been established, Socrates the narrator gradually focalizes his prospective interlocutor. This is where the two-stage arrangement of the openings is at its most effective. As mentioned above, the transition from one stage to another involves a change of scene and modification in the cast of characters. Both Charmides and Lysis appear at the second stage, and their identity is disclosed step by step:

> I, in my turn, began to make enquiries about matters at home – about the present state of philosophy, and about the youth. I asked whether any of them were remarkable for wisdom or beauty, or both. Critias, glancing at the door, noticed some youths who were coming in, and talking noisily to one another, followed by a crowd. "Of the beauties, Socrates," he said, "I fancy that you will soon be able to form a judgment. For those who are just entering are the advanced guard and admirers of the great beauty, as he is thought to be, of the day, and he is likely to be not far off himself." "Who is he?" I said. "And who is his father?" "I rather think that you know him too, although he was not grown up at the time of your departure," he replied. "Charmides is his name; he is my cousin and the son of my uncle Glaucon." "Certainly, I know him," I said, "for he was remarkable even then when he was still a child, and I should imagine that by this time he must be almost a young man." "You will see," he said, "in a moment what progress he has made and what he is like." He had scarcely said the word, when Charmides entered.[13]

> "This Lysis must be a youngster," I said, "for the name does not recall anyone to me." "Why," he said, "his father being a very well-known man, he is still commonly called by his father's name. But I am sure that you must know his face, for that is quite enough to distinguish him." "But tell me whose son he is," I said. "He is the eldest son of Democrates, of the deme of Aexone." "Ah, Hippothales, I said; what a noble and really perfect love you have found!"[14]

13 *Chrm.* 153d2-154b7. Plato's relative (his mother's cousin) Critias (460-403 BCE) was the leader of the oligarchy of the Thirty ("The Thirty Tyrants," 404 BCE); poet and philosopher, one of the circle of Socrates. He appears as a speaker in the *Protagoras*, and possibly also in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* (although his identity here is disputed); frequently mentioned in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and *Hellenica*. Critias' younger cousin and ward Charmides was also involved with the Thirty; he appears in Plato's *Protagoras* and is one of the characters in Xenophon's *Symposium*. See further Nails 2002: 90–94, 106–11. On Critias and Charmides in Plato and Xenophon see also Danzig 2014.

14 *Ly.* 204e1–10. The gravestone of Lysis and his son was unearthed in the Piraeus in 1974. See further Nails 2002: 195–97.

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Such gradual focalization through a series of questions and answers is no other than Plato's favorite strategy of zooming-in (see above, pp. 20–21). It is important to keep in mind that here and elsewhere the narrator is not he who supplies the missing information but he who absorbs it, thereby making the reader absorb this information as well. Put as simply as possible, the narrator is the one who asks questions.

But Socrates' role as the focus of perception is not restricted to the dialogues' openings, nor is zooming-in the only means of focalization that Plato employs. As the dialogues proceed, it is Socrates again who communicates to us the characters' emotional state as he perceives it: the laughter of Charmides or of Lysis and Menexenus,[15] the blushing of Charmides and Lysis (*Chrm.* 158c, *Ly*. 204bc), the distress and embarrassment of Critias,[16] the blushing and delight of Hippothales (*Ly*. 213d, 222b), the deep concentration of Lysis and even his silence (*Ly*. 213d, 222a, cf. 222b). The same holds true of Socrates' own emotional responses,[17] for example, his reaction to Charmides' beauty:

> *Oh my noble friend!* I caught the sight of the inwards of his garment, and took the flame, and no longer belonged to myself.[18]

Rather more often than not, such descriptions of a character's emotional state signal turning points in the dialogue's plot. In the *Charmides*, Critias' distress and lack of restraint at Socrates' demolishing his argument that temperance is one's doing one's own business (161b6, put in the mouth of Charmides) marks the transition to the next stage of the discussion (162cd), whereas Socrates' diagnosis that Critias is ashamed "to admit before the company that he could not answer my challenge" (169c7-d1) leads us to the sixth and final definition

15 *Chrm.* 156a4, 162b11; *Ly*. 207c6, 208d7. Lysis' companion Menexenus also appears as Socrates' interlocutor in the eponymous dialogue (below, Chapter 3). See further Nails 2002: 202–203.

16 *Chrm.* 162cd, 169cd. On Socrates "remarkably thick description of the motivations of Critias" at *Chrm.* 162cd see Morgan 2004: 363–64. Still, I do not share Morgan's contention that in this and similar passages Socrates the narrator "displays a degree of knowledge that borders on omniscience": as Morgan herself points out further on, Socrates' conclusions about what the other characters think and feel "are based on his interpretations of the conversational dynamics;" see Morgan 2004: 363, 364. On the discussion of what ostensibly looks like Socrates' momentarily omniscience in the opening scene of the *Republic* see Ferrari 2010: 23; on Plato's preventing in the *Phaedo* the effect of narrator's omniscience by means of metalepsis see below, Chapter 4, with n. 37.

17 On the role of Socrates the narrator in providing the background information and describing his own and the characters' emotional responses see also Murley 1955: 283–85; Bowery 2007: 85, 92–96.

18 *Chrm.* 155d3-4; my emphasis (see below, on breaking the boundaries between narrative levels that the passage involves).

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of temperance as the knowledge of good and evil. The narrator's text at the reversal of the argument in the *Lysis* is no less effective (below, pp. 135–38).

### 2.1.2 Metalepsis

On three occasions in the *Charmides*, all of them exclamations expressing Socrates' excitement at the sight of Charmides' beauty, Socrates the narrator directly addresses his unidentified narratee ("*O my friend!*" or "*O my noble friend!*").[19] This is equivalent to the practice, widespread in the 18th- and 19th-century novel, of the author/narrator addressing the implied reader directly – as, for example, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*: "*Gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt!*" (Ch. 27; my emphasis). In causing the extradiegetic narrative act to intrude into the intradiegetic domain, such an apostrophic address would qualify as a mild case of rhetorical metalepsis, namely metalepsis that does not affect the plot level (see above, p. 23).[20]

## 2.2 *The Republic*

As in many other respects, so in its treatment of narrative voice Book 1 of the *Republic* stands apart from the rest of the dialogue. Some of the differences are due to its position as the introductory book – a "prologue" (*prooimion*), as Plato himself put it (*Resp*. 357a2), others much less so. However that may be, Socrates the narrator of *Republic* 1 is undeniably much closer to Socrates of the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* than to Socrates the narrator of *Republic* 2–10 (more below). This however does not affect his playing the part of narrator-hero in both.

### 2.2.1 Narrator-Hero

The narrative of the *Republic* opens with Socrates' description of the dialogue's setting:

> I went down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston, that I might offer up my prayers to the goddess… When we had finished

19 *Chrm*. 154b8, 155c5, 155d3 (quoted above, with n. 18).

20 On a metaleptic relation with the reader by means of the second-person pronoun see McHale 1987: 223–25; on the metaleptic potential of apostrophic addresses to the reader see Pier 2013: 3.2.26. Since rhetoric, to which the term "apostrophe" ("a turning away from") originally belongs (see de Jong 2009: 93 n. 16), does not create a narrated world different from the world of the audience, the orator's addresses to the audience do not involve metaleptic transgression. In fiction the situation is different. Here, the addresses to the reader satisfy the sufficient conditions for metalepsis as recently formulated by Julian Hanebeck, in that the narrator and his addressee belong "to distinct spatiotemporal frames of reference, which results in a fiction-internal paradoxical transgression defying representational logic" (Hanebeck 2017: 25).

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> our prayers and viewed the spectacle, we turned in the direction of the city; and at that instant Polemarchus the son of Cephalus chanced to catch sight of us from the distance … and told his servant to run and bid us wait for him. … and in a few moments Polemarchus appeared, and with him Adeimantus, Glaucon's brother, Niceratus the son of Nicias, and several others who had been at the procession.[21]

As distinct from the *Charmides* and the *Lysis*, Socrates makes no new acquaintances in this dialogue; still, the narrator's focusing his attention on the main interlocutor proceeds in stages here as well. As with Charmides and Lysis, Socrates meets Thrasymachus,[22] his main interlocutor in *Republic* 1, only in the second stage of the exposition, and it is not until he has first conversed with Cephalus and then with Polemarchus does their confrontation begin. Cephalus, Socrates' first interlocutor, is the first to be zoomed-in:

> Accordingly we went with Polemarchus to his house; and there we found his brothers Lysias and Euthydemus, and with them Thrasymachus the Chalcedonian, Charmantides the Paeanian, and Cleitophon the son of Aristonymus. There too was Cephalus the father of Polemarchus, whom I had not seen for a long time, and I thought him very much aged. (328b4-c1)

As in the *Charmides* and the *Lysis*, the first-person narrator of the *Republic* focalizes the narrative not only at the beginning but also in the body of the dialogue. It is indeed Socrates the narrator who makes us perceive the laughter of Cephalus (331d9), Thrasymachus' anger and sarcastic cackle (336b-d, 337a3), his eagerness to interfere in the discussion (338a5-6), his frustrated intention to leave (344d1-5), as well as his sweating and blushing (350d1-3).[23] And it is Socrates again who describes his own emotional responses to the events of the dialogue: "I was panic-stricken at his words, and could not look at him without fear" (336d5-6). As in the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* again, no focus of perception other than the narrator is available.

21 *Resp*. 327a1-c3. Polemarchus, son of Cephalus of Syracuse and brother of the orator Lysias, was one of the wealthiest people in Athens; he was executed by the Thirty in 404 BCE; see further Nails 2002: 251. Apart from the *Republic*, Plato's brother Glaucon appears in the frame stories of the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium*; see n. 33 below and n. 46 to Chapter 4.

22 A prominent rhetorician, Thrasymachus is also referred to in the *Phaedrus* and the pseudo-Platonic *Cleitophon*, as well as in Aristophanes and Lysias; in 407 BCE he apparently spent time in Athens on a diplomatic mission on behalf of his native Chalcedon. See further Nails 2002: 288–90.

23 On the descriptions of emotional states of the characters in *Republic* 1 and the other narrated dialogues see Murley 1955; Bowery 2007.

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In Books 2–10 of the *Republic* Thrasymachus withdraws into the background, and the atmosphere of the dialogue changes. I can hardly improve on Ruby Blondell's assessment of the stylistic transformation that takes place here: "Book 2 presents us with an unequivocal shift in philosophical method, accompanied by an equally radical change in dramatic style."[24] This would be true of the dialogue's narrative voice as well. To be sure, Socrates the narrator is still capable of producing such vivid descriptions as, for example, the following episode at the beginning of Book 5:

> I was proceeding to tell the order in which the four evil forms appeared to me to succeed one another, when Polemarchus, who was sitting a little beyond Adeimantus, stretched out his hand, took hold of the upper part of his coat by the shoulder, and drew him towards himself, leaning forward so as to be quite close and saying something in his ear, of which we only caught the words, "Shall we let it go, or what shall we do?" (449a7-b6)

Significantly, this intervention emerges at a turning point of the dialogue. It introduces the great digression consisting of "three waves" of argument (equality of women, wives and children in common, philosopher kings), which embraces Books 5–7 of the *Republic* and forms its philosophical core.[25] As we have noted, placing the narrator's text at structurally important junctions is characteristic of the other narrated dialogues as well.

On the whole, however, Socrates the character is much more prominent in Books 2–10 than Socrates the narrator. He not only leads the conversation but also punctuates its course by recapitulating and commenting on the argument.[26] Socrates' principal interlocutors are now Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus. While they certainly take part in navigating the dialogue's plot (the beginning of Book 2 immediately comes to mind here),[27] whatever their emotions they mostly keep them to themselves. Through 264 pages of the Stephanus text laughter is registered only twice.[28] The contrast with Plato's other narratives, including the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues, could

24 Blondell 2002: 190. See also Ferrari 2010: 22–28.

25 See further below, Chapter 6, p. 128.

26 See e.g. *Resp*. 357a, 358c, 368d-369a, 376d, 392c, 398bc, 403c, 420b, 424b, 432c, 434de, 435cd, 443b, 445c, 450a, 451bc, 472b, 484a, 490cd, 502c, 502e, 503a, 504b, 528a, 528e, 530e, 531d, 532de, 541b, 543a-c, 545ab, 548cd, 572b, 588b, 596a, 603de. On the role of metanarrative comments in Plato's dialogues see Chapter 6.

27 Discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, p. 128.

28 *Resp*. 398c7, 451b2. Glaucon is the one who laughs on both occasions. At 608d5 he is described as looking at Socrates "in amazement" (*thaumasas*).

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not be stronger: in the *Euthydemus*, whose narrated part is equivalent to 34 pages of the Stephanus text, laughter is registered six times, in the *Protagoras* (51 Stephanus pages) four times, and in the *Phaedo* (59 Stephanus pages) no fewer than eight times.[29]

### 2.2.2 Metalepsis

A remarkable case of metalepsis, which, moreover, is much more sophisticated than the apostrophic addresses we encountered in the *Charmides*, emerges in *Republic* 1. On one occasion Socrates the narrator explicitly distances himself from Socrates the character:

> Thrasymachus agreed on all these points, *not as smoothly as I tell now*, but reluctantly and with great effort, sweating abundantly – for it was summer into the bargain. And then I saw what I had not yet seen before: Thrasymachus blushing.[30]

The words "not as smoothly (*rhaidiōs*) as I tell now," relating to Thrasymachus' reluctant yielding to Socrates' argument, belong to the extradiegetic level, that is, to the "now" of the act of narration in which Socrates the narrator is involved. For a moment, Socrates' remark breaks the boundary between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic level of the narrative without, at the same time, substantially affecting the latter, which qualifies it as rhetorical metalepsis (above, p. 23).

The metaleptic passage in *Republic* 1 draws a clear-cut dividing line between the first-person narrator and his earlier self as a character in the story. It unambiguously demonstrates that Plato was fully aware of the distance between "the narrating self" and "the narrated self" – a kind of awareness, it should be added, which is attested in Greek literary tradition as early as the Homeric *Odyssey*, in the remarks of Odysseus the narrator on the reckless behavior of his former self in the Cyclops' cave.[31]

But the passage is also significant in other respects. Socrates' words "not as smoothly as I tell now" make the reader realize that the dialogue presents an edited version, as it were, of the original conversation, adjusted as Socrates the narrator saw fit. In other words, Socrates is envisaged not merely as the one

29 On the *Euthydemus*, *Protagoras*, and *Phaedo* see below, Chapter 4.

30 *Resp*. 350c12-d3; my translation and emphasis.

31 *Od*. 9.228–29: "But I would not agree [with the plea of the companions to leave the place] – better, much better, if I had! But no, I was eager to see the master"… (tr. W. Shewring, slightly adapted).

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who reports the conversation in which he himself has taken part but also as the one who, to borrow G.R.F. Ferrari's expression, "edits it for smoothness."[32] Additional instances of narrator's selective presentation of what is supposed to be a report of real events will be found in the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus* (Chapter 4).

•••

To sum up, in the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, and the *Republic* the narrator and the focus of perception concur. Socrates the narrator is consistently presented as the person through whom the story is focalized. As *Republic* 1 makes clear, Plato is fully aware of the distance between Socrates the narrator and Socrates the character; nevertheless, his dialogues' first-person narrator consistently adopts the focalizing role of his former self (cf. above, pp. 19–20). This strongly suggests that the markers of focalization appearing in the text, such as Socrates' description of the dialogue's setting, his gradual focusing on the main interlocutor (the zooming-in technique) and his perception of the characters' physical appearance and emotional responses, should be regarded as signals of narratorial authority. The point is important, and I will return to it in the concluding section of this chapter.

## 3 Multiple Narrators (the *Parmenides*)

In the *Parmenides* the narrator's role is negotiated differently from the other narrated dialogues. Cephalus of Clazomenae narrates how, on arriving in Athens, he and his compatriots met Glaucon and Adeimantus and asked them to be introduced to their half-brother Antiphon. As a youth Antiphon had often heard from Zeno's friend Pythodorus about the young Socrates' meeting with the philosophers Parmenides and Zeno, held in Pythodorus' house.[33] The company arrives in the house of Antiphon and finds him absorbed in supervising the fitting of a bridle for one of his horses. That task accomplished, Antiphon

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32 Ferrari 2010: 23. Cf. Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, Ch. 19: "'Tell me what they do in America,' pursued Madame Merle, who, it must be observed parenthetically, did not deliver herself at once of these reflexions, which are presented in a cluster for the convenience of the reader."

33 Cephalus of Clazomenae appears only in this dialogue. Plato's brothers Adeimantus and Glaucon are Socrates' main interlocutors in the *Republic* (see n. 21 above). Antiphon the son of Pyrilampes was Plato's maternal half-brother. Pythodorus was an Athenian general in the Peloponnesian War; he is frequently mentioned by Thucydides; see Nails 2002: 259–60.

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reluctantly accedes to Cephalus' request and starts recounting what Pythodorus told him about Socrates' meeting with Parmenides and Zeno. Cephalus' retelling the narrative of Antiphon, who was in turn retelling Pythodorus' narrative, eventually switches into dramatic form (see Chapter 1).

As distinct from the other narrated dialogues, the *Parmenides* contains more than one intradiegetic level. The narrative act of Pythodorus, who was present at the original conversation, is intradiegetic by virtue of its being mediated by the narrative act of his narratee Antiphon. The narrative act of Antiphon is in turn intradiegetic by virtue of its being mediated by the narrative act of his narratee Cephalus. Cephalus is the dialogue's extradiegetic narrator, who addresses its unidentified narratee and, simultaneously, the implied reader. At the same time, Cephalus is also a character in the frame story he delivers, so that his narration forms the dialogue's first intradiegetic level (see above, pp. 19–20, on the ambivalent position of the first-person narrator). The transition to the second intradiegetic level is accompanied by a spatial change: Cephalus and his company move to the house of Antiphon, another frame narrator of the dialogue. The transition to the third intradiegetic level is accompanied by a spatiotemporal change: we are transferred to the past, to the house of Pythodorus in the Ceramicus and to the original narrator of the story. Each transition is accompanied by a shift of narrative voice: the narratee on one intradiegetic level becomes the narrator on another.

As a result, the dialogue features two frame narrators, Cephalus and Antiphon,[34] who are absent from the main story (heterodiegetic narrators; see above, p. 17), and the narrator properly speaking, Pythodorus, who is present in the main story but plays no active part in it (homodiegetic narrator-observer; see above, p. 17):

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1st level | Cephalus | FRAME |
| 2nd level | Antiphon | FRAME |
| 3rd level | Pythodorus | STORY |

### 3.1 *Frame Narrator 1: Cephalus*

Cephalus, the primary narrator of the *Parmenides*, is absent from the main story. Accordingly, as distinct from Socrates of the *Republic*, the *Lysis*, and the *Charmides*, Cephalus is in no position to focalize the dialogue in its entirety. His narratorial authority spreads only onto the frame narrative, namely his meeting with Glaucon and Adeimantus, their joint visit to the house of Antiphon,

34 On frame narrators see above, pp. 21–22.

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and the description of Antiphon's daily routine and his grudging consent to tell the story (the first intradiegetic level). Within this limited sphere, however, Cephalus' role as the focus of perception is exhibited in full. This is how, for example, he approaches Adeimantus:

> "I want you to tell me the name of your half-brother, which I have forgotten. He was a mere child when I last came here from Clazomenae, but that was long time ago; his father's name, if I remember rightly, was Pyrilampes?" "Yes," he said. "And his?" "Antiphon." (126b1-7)

This is a standard case of zooming-in, typical of Plato's descriptions of the initial focalization by the narrator (above, pp. 20–21). Even Cephalus' beginning the inquiry by naming the father of the person on whom his narrative is focalized parallels similar inquiries in other dialogues (see above on the *Lysis*, and below on the *Laches* and the *Theaetetus*).

### 3.2 *Frame Narrator II: Antiphon*

Similar limitations apply to Antiphon (the second intradiegetic level). Antiphon is of course one of the characters in Cephalus' story, but his own story and the circumstances of his becoming exposed to Pythodorus' report are barely mentioned: we are only told that Cephalus and his countrymen have heard that Antiphon, who spent considerable time in the company of Pythodorus, memorized a report of the conversation among Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, which he heard from Pythodorus more than once (126b8-c3). In fact, Antiphon's narratorial authority is made manifest only twice – at the beginning of his narrative, when he mediates Pythodorus' description of his guests' appearance (below), and in the episode signaling the transition to Parmenides' demonstration of the method of deduction, that is, to the dramatic part of the dialogue:

> When Zeno had thus spoken, Pythodorus, *according to Antiphon's account*, said that he himself and Aristoteles and the whole company entreated Parmenides to demonstrate what he is speaking of. "I cannot refuse," said Parmenides, "and yet I feel rather like the horse of Ibycus, for, when in his old age, against his will, Ibycus fell in love, he likened himself to an old racehorse, who was about to run in a chariot race, shaking with fear at the course he knew so well. And I also experience a trembling when I remember through what an ocean of words I have to wade at my time of life. But I must indulge you for, as Zeno says, we are

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> here alone. Where shall I begin, and what shall be our first hypothesis if I am to play this laborous game (*paidian*)?"[35]

The passage is heavily marked (see especially the digression on Ibycus), and justifiably so. This is the turning point of the dialogue, and it is tempting to suggest that by referring to Antiphon's narratorial authority at this specific point Plato meant to create the impression that, as with Euclides of the *Theaetetus* (Chapter 1), it is Antiphon who is envisaged as responsible for the dramatic form assumed in the rest of the dialogue.

### 3.3 *Narrator-Observer: Pythodorus*

The frame narrators' narratorial authority does not exceed the frame story, but this does not mean that the main narrative of the *Parmenides* remains unfocalized. The focalization, filtered though it is through the frame narrators' voices (more below), is effected by Pythodorus, the ultimate source of the narrative (the third intradiegetic level). Pythodorus is he to whom the narratorial authority of the *Parmenides*' main story belongs.

At the same time, as distinct from Socrates the narrator of the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, and the *Republic*, Pythodorus the narrator of the *Parmenides* does not play the leading part in the story he delivers. His role is that of observer. As Genette put it,

> Absence is absolute, but presence has degrees. So we will have to differentiate within the homodiegetic type at least two varieties: one where the narrator is the hero of his narrative (*Gil Blas*) and one where he plays only a secondary role, which almost always turns out to be a role as observer and witness: Lockwood, the anonymous narrator of *Louis Lambert*, Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, Marlowe in *Lord Jim*, Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*, Zeitblom in *Doctor Faustus* – not to mention the most illustrious and most representative one of all, the transparent (but inquisitive) Dr. Watson of Conan Doyle.[36]

This is precisely where Pythodorus is positioned. Judging by Xenophon's *Symposium* and Plato's own *Symposium* and *Phaedo*, all employing narrators-observers, such positioning of the narrator would not have come as a surprise to Plato's readers.

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35 *Prm.* 136e5-137b1; my emphasis. On Plato's concept of *paidia* see Chapter 7, pp. 157–59.
36 Genette 1980: 245. On homodiegetic narrator see above, p. 17.

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Plato never forgets to emphasize that Pythodorus, a witness to the original conversation, is the bearer of narratorial authority:

> *And Antiphon told us that Pythodorus said that* Parmenides and Zeno came to Athens at the Great Panathenaea; Parmenides was well advanced in years, with white hair, of distinguished appearance, about sixty-five years old; Zeno was then nearly forty years of age, tall and fair to look upon. (127a7-b5; my emphasis)

Moreover, only from the moment Pythodorus appears on the stage are we able to follow the action:

> These [his writings] Zeno himself read to them in the absence of Parmenides, and had very nearly finished *when, according to Pythodorus' account, he himself entered*, and with him Parmenides and Aristoteles who was afterwards one of the Thirty, *and heard the little that remained*. Pythodorus, however, had already heard Zeno earlier. (127c5-d5; my emphasis)

And again, through Pythodorus we perceive Parmenides' and Zeno's reaction to the exposition of the Theory of Forms by the youthful Socrates:

> *Pythodorus told that, while Socrates was speaking, he himself supposed that Parmenides and Zeno would be upset at each one of his arguments*, but they listened attentively and often looked at one another, and smiled as if in admiration of Socrates. (130a3-7; my emphasis)

Note that what Pythodorus describes here is his perception of Socrates being focalized by characters in his story. Such focalization by characters, occurring fairly often in Plato, should be distinguished from the macro-focalization effected by the narrator. To quote Monika Fludernik:

> Focalization on the story level (i.e. one character observing another) does not properly belong to macro-focalization, i.e. the focalization of an entire text, but it is a small-scale management of the plot function. The only really important issue is that of the consistent or inconsistent rendering of the entire story by means of a particular slant or filter.[37]

37 Fludernik 1996: 258.

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But the episode also outlines the limits of focalization as implemented by the first-person narrator. Note indeed that Pythodorus' perception fails him the very moment we move from the characters' outward expression of emotions (in this case their smiles and glances) to their inner emotional life: before his perceiving the philosophers' reaction, Pythodorus could only speculate on what their attitude to Socrates' argument may be like. The episode underscores the fact that as regards Plato's narrators we will always be dealing with the so-called external focalization: the idea of omniscient narrator is absent from Plato's dialogues.[38]

The *Parmenides* is the only dialogue in the Platonic corpus whose opening is a frame narrative in the strict sense of the word: all the other frame stories in Plato's dialogues are thoroughly dramatic. Accordingly, the *Parmenides* is also the only Platonic dialogue that explicitly introduces multiple intradiegetic levels as represented by the successive narrations of Cephalus, Antiphon, and Pythodorus. Plato compensates for this cumbersome arrangement, first by almost completely suppressing the narrative level that Antiphon's narration belongs to, and second by eventually abandoning the narrated form altogether. Small wonder that in his other structurally complex narratives a more economic model of multi-level arrangement has been adopted (see Chapter 4).

### 3.4 *Metalepsis*

No frame-breaking in the strict sense of the world occurs in the *Parmenides*. Nevertheless, thanks to Plato's use of reported speech in the first part of the dialogue, the presence of the frame narrators, first and foremost Antiphon, is felt throughout Pythodorus' narrative (see the quotations above). The *Parmenides* is thus consistently presented as a narrative of a narrative of a narrative. Repeatedly reminding the readers of this fact, Plato blurs the boundaries between different narrative levels, thereby leaving us no opportunity to immerse ourselves in the world of the narrated story. This mode of presentation, resulting in all narrative levels being simultaneously present throughout the narrative, is especially characteristic of the *Symposium* (see above, p. 23 and below, Chapter 4).

### 3.5 *Juxtaposition of the Frame and the Narrative*

The framing story and the framed narrative of the *Parmenides* are both firmly focalized on Socrates. Thus Pythodorus not only lavishly depicts the youthful

38 On external focalization see Genette 1980: 189: "the narrator says less than the character knows." On Plato's narrator's lack of omniscience see above, with n. 16.

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Socrates expounding the Theory of Forms and coping with Parmenides' criticism of it, but also strives to convey Parmenides' and Zeno' admiration of the gifted and intellectually aspiring youth (above, p. 42). This fully corresponds to the initial request of the primary narrator Cephalus to learn about "a conversation that took place once between Socrates, Zeno and Parmenides" (126c1-2), a phrase that is clearly meant to advertise the scope of the subsequent narrative.[39] Alongside the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus*, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, the *Parmenides* is a dialogue whose multi-level structure is mobilized for creating an in-depth biographical sketch of the protagonist.

An additional effect of the *Parmenides*' juxtaposing the frame story and the main narrative is its establishing an intertextual connection with the *Republic*: Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus, Socrates' main interlocutors in the *Republic*, are presented in the *Parmenides* as listening to Antiphon's retelling Pythodorus' account of the meeting between Socrates and Parmenides.[40]

## 4 Conclusions

As the first-person narrative adopted in Plato's narrated dialogues has numerous counterparts in modern fiction, these dialogues readily lend themselves to being approached in terms of narrative theory. The first-person narrator of the narrated dialogues can be placed either within the narrated world of the main story (the homodiegetic narrator) or, as in the case of the multi-level *Parmenides*, within that of the narrative frame (the frame narrator, who is heterodiegetic as regards the main story). The narrator of Plato's narrated dialogues is either the story's main character (the autodiegetic narrator, or the narrator-hero) or an eyewitness of the events described (the narrator-observer).

In the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, and the *Republic*, which feature a single narrator, the narratorial authority, issuing from the narrator's first-hand experience of the narrated world as acquired by his former self, finds its expression in

39 Cf. Zuckert 1998: 877: "At whatever stage in his career Plato wrote the *Parmenides*, he clearly meant his readers to take it as their first view of a young Socrates." A similar advertising strategy is applied in the frame story of the *Symposium*; cf. *Symp*. 172a6-b3, Glaucon to Apollodorus, "I want to ask you about the gathering of Agathon, Socrates, Alcibiades, and other men of those days (τῶν τότε) who attended the dinner. What were their speeches in praise of love?" On the expression "men of those days" see below, n. 44 to Chapter 4.

40 Cf. Scolnicov 2003: 44: 'By them [Glaucon and Adeimantus], we are directed to the metaphysical scene of the *Republic*.'

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markers of focalization that regularly accompany the narrator throughout the text of the dialogues. In the multi-level *Parmenides*, the primary narrator is placed within the narrated world of the frame story and his narratorial authority is manifested, again, in markers of focalization issuing from his first-hand experience of this world. At the same time, the first- and second-level narrators are both excluded from the narrated world of the main story. The narratorial authority over the dialogue's main story is delegated to the bottom-level narrator-observer who belongs to the world of the main story and manifested, again, in markers of focalization that regularly accompany the narrator throughout the text of the dialogue.

As *Republic* 1 makes clear, Plato was fully aware of the distance between the first-person narrator and his former self who is present as a character in the narrated world of the dialogues ("the narrating self" and "the narrated self;" see above, p. 37). This, however, did not prevent him from treating the markers of focalization that accompany the narrator's former self as a character in the story as issued by the narrator himself (see further Chapter 1, pp. 19–20). As a result, the first-person narrator of Plato's narrated dialogues is consistently presented as focalizing the narrative in its entirety. This strongly suggests that the markers of focalization that appear in the narrator's text should be treated as signals of narratorial authority. Four such markers of focalization can be distinguished:

(a) the narrator perceives and describes the dialogue's setting;
(b) the narrator gradually absorbs information concerning the principal interlocutor and/or the subject of the dialogue (the zooming-in technique);
(c) the narrator registers the characters' physical appearance, movements, emotional responses, and the like;
(d) the scope of the narrative and the amount of information it contains are circumscribed by the narrator's personal experience (external focalization).

As the above list demonstrates, Plato's narrator is wholly identified in terms of perception and knowledge. The signals of narratorial authority are in fact nothing but different aspects of one and the same phenomenon, namely the positioning of the narrator as the dialogue's focus of perception through whose mediation the readers cognitively absorb everything that takes place in the dialogue.

Could the same signals of narratorial authority be used in a text with no explicitly manifested narrator? Testing the dramatic dialogues for the signals of narratorial authority will be our primary task in the next chapter. An additional function of Plato's narrator to be further examined is the narrator's ability, highlighted in *Republic* 1, to edit the original conversation according to

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his idea of how this conversation should be presented to the audience. Finally, it has been remarked more than once that Plato positions the narrator's text at structurally important junctions. If the practice is consistent, it may imply that Plato negotiates the narrator as the one who not only focalizes the story but also fashions it, thereby taking responsibility for the dialogue's plot. At this stage, however, our evidence is not solid enough (for example, so far we have encountered only one case of narrator-observer) to draw an informed conclusion. The discussion therefore should be postponed until the way the two other groups of dialogues behave in this respect has been examined as well.

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CHAPTER 3

# The Implicit Narrator: Dramatic Dialogues

## 1 Introducing the Dramatic Dialogues

Of the three groups of Plato's dialogues, the dramatic dialogues form the largest and the most heterogeneous one. It comprises the earliest and the latest dialogues, the shortest and the longest pieces in the corpus, the most elaborate and the least elaborate, and not a few dramatic dialogues are spurious. Small wonder, then, that Plato's dramatic dialogues exhibit a great variety of forms. This becomes immediately obvious from their openings.

The short and simply structured "Socratic" dialogues normally open with a concise and efficient "zooming-in" in the course of which Socrates or another character establishes for the reader's benefit his interlocutor's identity and social and professional standing, as well as the immediate circumstances of the encounter:

- In the *Euthyphro*, Euthyphro questions Socrates as to the reasons for his arrival at the Porch of the King Archon.
- In the *Crito*, Socrates questions Crito as to the reasons for his arrival in the prison early in the morning.
- In the *Ion* and *Hippias Maior,* Socrates questions the foreigners Ion and Hippias, respectively, as to the reasons for their arrival in Athens.
- In the *Hippias Minor*, Eudicus questions Socrates as to the reasons for his silence after Hippias' display of his art.
- In the *Menexenus*, Socrates questions Menexenus as to the outcome of the proceedings at the meeting of the Athenian Council.

Of the dialogues whose authenticity has been questioned, only the *Hippias Maior* functions as a regular Platonic dialogue in this respect. *Alcibiades II* opens with a single question (quoted above, p. 10) rather than a series of questions necessary for producing the zooming-in effect; in the *Theages*, the questioning is preceded by a long speech by the as yet unidentified Demodocus (121b-122b), which is sharply at variance with the usual procedure. There is no zooming-in in the spurious *Cleitophon*, *Hipparchus* and *Minos* nor, significantly, in *Alcibiades I*.[1]

1 Cf. Friedländer 1964: 232: "While the dialogue corresponds, in this general situation, to others like the *Charmides* and the *Lysis*, there are no secondary figures in the *Alcibiades* nor is there any setting full of charm or symbolic meaning."

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In the longer and more complex dialogues the introductory zooming-in is enhanced into an elaborate two-stage opening closely resembling the openings of the narrated dialogues. As in the latter, the transition from one stage to another involves a spatial change and/or modification in the cast of characters.

- In the *Laches*, (I) the opening conversation between Lysimachus and Melesias on the one hand and Nicias and Laches on the other does not include Socrates, (II) who joins the initial interlocutors only at a later stage (below, pp. 64–65).
- In the *Gorgias*, (I) Callicles, Socrates, and Chaerephon meet in the street, apparently before Callicles' house, (II) and only at a later stage do they enter the house, where they meet Gorgias and Polus.[2]
- In the *Phaedrus*, (I) Socrates meets Phaedrus in the city, (II) and they walk together to a shady spot on the banks of the Ilissus, where the conversation takes place; no change in the cast of characters is involved.
- In the *Laws*, (I) the interlocutors meet in Cnosus, and, (II) on their way to the cave and temple of Cretan Zeus, they arrive at a grove of cypresses, where most of their conversation apparently takes place; no change in the cast of characters is involved (625b8–c2, cf, 229a9–b2).

It is hard to avoid the impression that the transition from one stage to another, as well as the changes in the setting and/or the cast of characters that accompany the transition, are modeled on the narrated dialogues, where they form a standard and well-developed pattern (above, pp. 27–28). This can be taken as an additional indication of Plato treating the dramatic dialogues as a form of narrative.[3]

The same pattern, albeit in reduced form, is present in the *Sophist-Statesman* and *Timaeus-Critias*: in these dialogues, Plato economizes on the first stage of the exposition by creating the impression that it had taken place just before the dialogue began. This is obviously because all the dialogues of this group are set as sequels (above, p. 7). A similar strategy is applied in the

2 Cf. Dodds 1959: 188: "A similar change of scene from outdoors to indoors is explicitly indicated at *Lysis* 206de and in the prelude to the *Theaetetus*, 143b"; in Dodds' opinion, however, the action takes place at the entrance to a public building. On the two-stage opening of the *Gorgias* and its similarity to the settings of narrated dialogues see also Thesleff 2003: 552–53.

3 Cf. de Jong 2004: 7–8: "In the case of the dramatic dialogues of Plato and Lucian, that is to say, those dialogues which lack a narrative frame and consist solely of speeches, it seems most sensible – in view of their close similarity to the dialogues *with* a narrative frame – to see them as narratives with a suppressed primary narrator and suppressed primary narratees" (original emphasis); cf. also de Jong 2014a: 17 and above, Chapter 1 with nn. 16 and 20. On Lucian see Whitmarsh 2004: 468; on parallels between the narrated and the dramatic dialogues see also Tarrant 1996: 143–46.

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*Cratylus* and the *Philebus*, which start in the middle of an ongoing discussion – "with the second act," to borrow Dorothea Frede's apt characterization of the *Philebus*.[4] Two dramatic dialogues, the *Meno* and the *Laws*, combine an abrupt start with a series of strategically placed remarks elucidating the dialogue's setting.

The closures of the dramatic dialogues often bring the reader back to the opening scene: this is done either by indicating the departure of one or more participants (Euthyphro in the *Euthyphro*, Crito in the *Crito*, Cratylus and Hermogenes in the *Cratylus*, Socrates in the *Meno*, the *Philebus*, and the *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Phaedrus in the *Phaedrus*) or, as in the *Menexenus* and the *Laches*, by bringing the opening scene to a conclusion. But just as frequently the setting, once introduced, is ignored, and it is the conclusion of the argument that supplies the closure: this is the case of the *Ion*, the *Hippias Maior*, the *Hippias Minor*, the *Gorgias*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Laws*.

It is not out of the question that Plato was the first to compose dramatic dialogues. At least this is what seems to transpire from a papyrus fragment that probably belongs to the first or the second century CE:

> … imitating Sophron the mime writer too in respect of the dramatic element (*to dramatikon*) of the dialogues; for Aristotle is not to be believed when he says in his malice against Plato, in Book One of *On Poetry*, that dramatic dialogues had been written even before Plato by Alexamenus of Tenos.[5]

Aristotle's naming of Alexamenus of Tenos, an unknown entity, as Plato's predecessor in the writing of dialogues is also mentioned in Athenaeus and Diogenes Laertius;[6] yet, the papyrus fragment is unique in that it limits Alexamenus' supposed priority to the dramatic dialogues alone.

Michael Haslam has edited and thoroughly studied the papyrus. He concludes that like the other sources at our disposal it refers to the entire genre of the dialogue, therefore adds nothing substantial to the extant evidence.[7]

4 D. Frede 1996: 218.

5 *P. Oxy.* 3219. Tr. M. Haslam.

6 Ath. 11.505c; Diog. Laert. 3.48.

7 Haslam 1972: 17–24. The argument proceeds as follows. (1) Since the terms "dramatic" and "mimetic" are often interchangeable, there is no substantial difference in meaning between the two. (2) Therefore, the narrated dialogues, although not dramatic in the technical sense, should also be qualified as mimetic. (3) Ergo, when using the term "dramatic" the author of the papyrus meant the vividness characteristic of Plato's dialogues rather than their mode

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However, as Haslam himself admits, this would be at variance with the standard classification of Platonic dialogues into dramatic, narrated ("diegetic" or "diegematic") and mixed, which was widely used in antiquity.[8] We also might consider that first, our sources repeatedly credit Plato with bringing Sophron's mimes to Athens,[9] and second, that Plato was in all probability not the first to compose narrated dialogues (above, pp. 28–29); this would lead to the conclusion that whatever role Alexamenus might have played, the argument for Plato's priority in introducing dramatic dialogues should be taken seriously. Reasonably therefore, this was the argument that the author of the papyrus text polemically emphasized.[10]

However that may be, we saw in Chapter 1 that *Republic* 3 leaves no room for doubt that in Plato's eyes the dramatic dialogues, as indeed any composition cast in dramatic form, should be approached as a form of narrative. We also saw that *Theaetetus* 143b5–c5 negotiates a dramatic dialogue as a narrated dialogue whose narrator, although suppressed, is nevertheless implicitly present in the text. In our analysis of the narrated dialogues in Chapter 2 we concluded that Plato's narrator is consistently defined in terms of perception, which allowed us to isolate signals of narratorial authority, all based on markers of focalization (pp. 44–45). In this chapter, the signals of narratorial authority identified in Chapter 2 will serve as criteria on the basis of which the dramatic dialogues will be examined.

I shall start with the so-called Athenian part of the *Theaetetus* (its frame story takes place in Megara) for two reasons. First, although the *Theaetetus* formally belongs to the mixed dialogues and will be treated as such in the next chapter, its bottom-level narrative is, as we have seen, programmatically introduced as a regular dramatic dialogue. Secondly, the *Theaetetus* is the only dialogue the results of whose analysis can be controlled by Plato's explicit identification of it as a dialogue with an implicit narrator. The results obtained

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of presentation. We saw, however, that for Plato at least, "the dramatic" and "the mimetic" are not fully interchangeable entities: a dialogue can be mimetic – for example, the narrated dialogues – without at the same time being presented in dramatic form (above, pp. 1–5).

8 See e.g. Diog. Laert. 3.50: "I am not unaware that there are other ways in which certain writers classify the dialogues. For some dialogues they call dramatic, others narrated, and others again they call mixed. But the terms they employ in their classification of the dialogues are better suited to the tragic stage than to philosophy." Tr. R. D. Hicks, slightly adapted.

9 On Sophron and the tradition of his influence on Plato see Haslam 1972: 18–19; Laborderie 1978: 18–25; Clay 1994: 33–37; differently Ford 2010.

10 Similarly Tarrant 2000: 6. As Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1920: 28) pointed out, Aristotle is reported to have referred to Alexamenus as having composed "dialogues," not "Socratic dialogues."

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for the *Theaetetus* will thus be of utmost importance in our approach to the other dramatic dialogues in the corpus.

## 2 The *Theaetetus* as a Test Case

The Athenian part of the *Theaetetus* starts with Socrates asking Theodorus of Cyrene,[11] whose schoolroom he is visiting, to tell him about promising young Athenians among his students: this is the context in which Theaetetus[12] makes his appearance.

The opening, namely, Theaetetus being gradually introduced to Socrates, thereby to the reader, closely resembles the openings of the narrated *Charmides* and *Lysis*.[13] Acceding to Socrates' request, Theodorus starts with a lavish description of one of his Athenian students, highly praising the youth's character and intellectual prowess but also emphasizing his lack of physical beauty (143e-144b and below, p. 100). Socrates asks whose son the boy is, but Theodorus has forgotten the father's name: he simply points at the boy himself, who at that very moment enters the stage in the company of two other students. "I know the youth," Socrates says, "but I do not know his name." Like the Socrates of the *Lysis*, the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is better informed about his new acquaintance's father than about the boy himself: "He is the son of Euphronius the Sunian, who was himself an eminent man." At this point, Theodorus at last supplies the name of the person to whom the dialogue is dedicated: "Theaetetus, Socrates, is his name" (144c5–d1). Plato uses the zooming-in technique, that is, releasing the relevant information by gradually focusing the narrator's attention on the principal interlocutor, exactly as in the dialogues with an explicit narrator: Socrates focalizes Theaetetus by asking questions (above, p. 33).

As in the narrated dialogues again, Socrates' role as the focus of perception is not restricted to the exposition. As the dialogue proceeds, Socrates communicates to the reader his own feelings and those of the others as he perceives them. Thus he speaks freely about "a terrible passion" (*tis erōs deinos*) for dialectical exercise that has taken hold of him (169c1) and of his feeling of awe

11 Geometer, the tutor of Theaetetus and according to some sources of Plato as well; appears also in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. See further Nails 2002: 282–83.

12 A brilliant mathematician on whose work Books 10 and 13 of Euclid's *Elements* are apparently based; the lunar crater Theaetetus is named after him. Appears also in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Cf. Nails 2002: 274–78.

13 Cf. Morgan 2003:104: "Socrates' narration in the *Charmides* is precisely the narrative format we would have encountered in the *Theaetetus* if Euclides had not removed the narratorial comments." On the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* see above, Chapter 2.

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(*aischunomai*) toward Parmenides (183e4–5); he confesses that he is angry (*duscherainō*) with what he calls his own "stupidity and tiresome garrulity," which has reduced to aporia what formerly seemed a winning definition of knowledge (195c1–7). He not only diagnoses Theaetetus with spiritual pregnancy but also discerns that the boy himself is aware of his condition (151b7–8), and he registers Theodorus' uncharacteristic eagerness to proceed with the discussion of perception and flux, thereby drawing the reader's attention to the subject (181b8).

The two other characters also focalize on several occasions, Theaetetus hesitantly (157c4–6 "I cannot make out, Socrates, whether you are giving your own opinion or only wanting to draw me out"), Theodorus much less so (177c3–4 "I would rather have the digressions [sc. than the argument], for at my age I find them easier to follow"). The macro-focalization, however, is consistently implemented by Socrates,[14] and it is Socrates again who, in a manner characteristic of Plato's narrators, accounts for his own movements in the dialogue's closure:

> And now I have to go to the porch of the King, where I am to meet Meletus and his indictment. Tomorrow morning, Theodorus, I shall hope to see you again at this place.[15]

To recapitulate, in the *Theaetetus* Plato does not just show us how he suppressed the dialogue's narrator and rendered him implicit as a result: he also identifies the implicit narrator by the same means by which his explicit narrators are identified. In spite of the fact that the *Theaetetus*' narrator is suppressed, the signals of narratorial authority appearing in the text allow us to construct him as a fully operational factor. To put it as simply as possible, the narrator is he who focalizes the dialogue in its entirety: no alternative focus of perception is sustained throughout the dialogue. To find out whether this model of an implicit narrator is generally applicable, let us cast a closer look at the other dramatic dialogues, starting with the earlier ones.[16]

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14 On macro-focalization see above, p. 42.

15 *Tht.* 210d1–4; cf. also the last sentences of the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium* (quoted below, pp. 54, 79).

16 The order of the so-called earlier dialogues in this chapter does not assume the order of their composition. On the relative chronology of the so-called middle and late dialogues see Chapter 5.

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## 3 Bifocality or a Single Focus of Perception? (the *Euthyphro, Crito*, *Menexenus* vs. the *Ion* and *Hippias Maior*)

If Plato indeed conceives the dramatic dialogues as narratives with an implicit narrator, each of them should reasonably exhibit a clearly discernible single focus of perception. However, in plain contradiction to what we have observed in the narrated dialogues and the *Theaetetus*, three dramatic dialogues do not conform to this pattern.

### 3.1 *The Euthyphro*

Socrates and the diviner Euthyphro meet in the Porch of the King Archon. "Why have you left the Lyceum, Socrates? And what are you doing in the Porch of the King Archon? Surely you cannot be concerned in a suit before the King, like myself"? (2a1–4). Answering Euthyphro's questions one by one, Socrates explains that he is the prosecuted, not the prosecutor. He names his prosecutor (2b8–10 "His name is Meletus, and he is of the deme of Pitthis") and describes his appearance (2b10–11 "He has a beak, and long straight hair, and a beard which is ill grown"). Euthyphro does not remember the man. He asks Socrates what he is charged with, and Socrates supplies him and the reader the required information.

At this stage, Euthyphro is clearly the one who focalizes the story. It is he who identifies the dialogue's setting for us ("what are you doing in the Porch of the King Archon?"), and it is Euthyphro again who, by asking questions, is gradually zooming in the background information on Socrates' impending trial. Euthyphro expresses unconditional solidarity with Socrates in his plight (3a7–8 "My opinion is that in trying to do you wrong [*adikein*] he [Meletus] is simply aiming a blow at the foundation of the state") and fully identifies with him (3c3–4 "But they are jealous of all people of our kind; but we must be brave and go at them").

But when Euthyphro expresses his confidence that the affair will come to naught and Socrates will win his case just as he himself will win his own (10e4–6), Socrates takes over. "What is your suit, Euthyphro? Are you the pursuer or the defendant?" (10e7–8). The procedure is repeated, but now it is Socrates who gradually focalizes Euthyphro's story by asking questions. As a result, the zooming-in procedure is applied in both directions: Euthyphro focalizes Socrates and is in turn focalized by him.

In the concluding part of the dialogue, the focus is again transferred to Euthyphro, for it is he who informs us about his leaving the stage: "I am in a hurry and must go now" (15e3–4). The remark may look trivial, unless we take into

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account that announcing the characters' movements is normally the narrator's prerogative – for example, in Socrates' words at the end of the *Protagoras*: "Having said and heard that much, we went our way."[17]

## 3.2 *The Crito*

A similar reciprocal focalization takes place in the *Crito*. In the dialogue's opening, we perceive the setting through the eyes of Socrates who, as we will learn in a moment, awakens from sleep: "Why have you come at this hour, Crito? It must be quite early?" (43a1). Crito informs Socrates and the reader of the hour of the day at which the conversation takes place (43a4 "The dawn is breaking"), and at this point we learn that the action of the dialogue takes place in the Athenian prison: "I wonder that the keeper of the prison would let you in" (43a5–6). Socrates learns that Crito has been sitting for hours at his bedside watching him sleep (43a9, b4), and finally is informed that the ship from Delos, whose arrival signals that the execution is approaching, is expected this very day (43c5–8).

From this point onwards, it is Crito who, in turn, learns from Socrates the particulars of the latter's recent vision and its relevance in determining correctly the execution date (44ab). In the subsequent confrontation, either interlocutor argues in favor of his position in the debate as to whether Socrates should escape from prison (Crito) or stay and face the execution (Socrates). As in the *Euthyphro*, the focalization is reciprocal, with no unambiguous signs of narratorial authority being attached to either.

## 3.3 *The Menexenus*

Socrates meets Menexenus,[18] who has just left the meeting of the Council that dealt with the election of the speaker for the annual funeral oration. The dialogue starts with a standard zooming-in, conducted by Socrates.

> "Whence come you, Menexenus? Are you from the Agora?" "Yes, Socrates; I have been at the Council." "And what might you be doing at the Council? …" "I went to the council chamber because I heard that the Council was about to choose someone who was to speak over the dead. For you know that there is to be a public funeral?" "Yes, I know. And whom did they choose?" "No one; they delayed the election until tomorrow." (234a1–b8)

17 *Prt.* 362a4. Also in the *Theaetetus*, the *Cratylus*, the *Symposium*, the *Euthydemus*, and the *Phaedrus*, cf. above, with n. 15.

18 Menexenus is also one of Socrates' interlocutors in the *Lysis*, see above, n. 15 to Chapter 2.

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Having learnt from Menexenus that the speaker has not yet been elected, Socrates intimates that an alternative funeral oration, presumably composed by Aspasia, is already written. Now it is Menexenus' turn to focalize whatever information Socrates is ready to share with him:

> "Do you think that you could speak yourself if there should be a necessity, and if the Council were to choose you?" "That I should be able to speak is no great wonder, Menexenus, considering that I have an excellent mistress in the art of rhetoric – she who has made so many good speakers, and one who was the best among all the Hellenes – Pericles, the son of Xanthippus." "And who is she? I suppose that you mean Aspasia?" (235e1–8)

A series of additional questions put by Menexenus leads to Socrates' delivery of the oration, but not before he clarifies to the reader that no other audience is present (236d1–2 "since the two of us are alone"), thus signaling that it is he who focalizes the dialogue at this stage.

Socrates and Menexenus constantly switch places, which strongly suggests that neither is invested with narratorial authority. This is probably why the question as to whether the funeral oration delivered by Socrates is a genuine piece of patriotic rhetoric or a parody on just such a piece has been disputed up to the present day.[19] However that may be, the *Menexenus* stands apart from the *Euthyphro* and the *Crito* in that its bifocality does not reflect two conflicting positions, and the encounter as a whole is hardly more than an introduction to the speech that follows.

•••

In their recent study of the prologue of the *Theaetetus*, Eleni Kaklamanou and Maria Pavlou contrast the narrated and the dramatic dialogues by characterizing the latter as follows:

> When a story is rendered entirely in direct speech, it is not mediated by a narrative voice but through the voices of the characters, who both focalize and speak. … Moreover, the reader is rendered a witness to narrated events and is free to see and interpret things for himself without being

19 Cf. Guthrie 1975: 315: "In fact to reconcile the introduction with the content of the speech has proved the crux of interpretation, and led to endless controversy." See also Friedländer 1964: 216–17.

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> guided to understand them in a particular way, influenced by evaluative comments from the narrator.[20]

The above analysis of the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus* fully agrees with this assessment. The three dialogues are undeniably bifocal, and they act as purely mimetic pieces on a par with drama or mime. Compare, for example, the third episode of Euripides' *Medea*. Aegeus arrives in Corinth where he meets Medea. First, Medea focalizes Aegeus through a series of questions, thus allowing the audience to identify the visitor and to learn about the circumstances of his sudden appearance in Corinth (665–88). Then Medea is in turn focalized by Aegeus, who has caught sight of her glum countenance; through a series of questions, he is gradually exposed to the story of her current predicament (689–708). The strictly bifocal exchange provides an almost exact parallel to the encounter of Socrates and Euthyphro in the *Euthyphro*.

Still, that is not to say that multiple perspectives in drama or mime cannot form a hierarchy favoring some character perspectives over others.[21] In both the *Crito* and the *Euthyphro* Socrates' perspective is manifestly more privileged than his interlocutors'. But a single overarching perspective, the prerogative of the narrator, is absent from these dialogues. The markers of focalization are evenly distributed among the dialogues' characters, which is blatantly at variance with what we have observed for the narrated dialogues and the *Theaetetus*. In other words, there is no implicit narrator in the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, or the *Menexenus.* The situation however changes as soon as we turn to the other dramatic dialogues.

## 3.4 *The Ion*

The opening of the *Ion*, a short and simply structured dramatic dialogue, runs as follows:

> "Welcome, Ion. Where have you come from? From your home city of Ephesus?" "Not at all, Socrates, but from Epidaurus, from the festival of Asclepius." "Do the Epidaurians have also a contest of rhapsodes in the god's honor?" "O yes; and of other sorts of musical performers." "Well, and did you take part in the competition? And how did it go?" "I obtained the first prize, Socrates." "Well done; and I hope that you will do the same for us at the Panathenaea." (530a1–b3)

20 Kaklamanou and Pavlou 2016: 129.

21 On the hierarchy of perspectives in drama see Pfister 1988: 57–68. Cf. also Cohn 2001: 495–96.

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Similar to what we have observed in the case of the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus*, by asking questions the speaker gradually focalizes the missing information and hands it over to the reader: Ion's city of origin, his profession, his winning of the first prize at the Epidaurian festival of Asclepius, the reason for his coming to Athens.[22] The procedure is minimalist but effective – that is all we need to know for the dialogue to proceed. However, in contrast to the *Euthyphro,* the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus*, the focalization in the *Ion* is strictly one-sided. We perceive Ion through Socrates' eyes, but when it comes to Ion's perception of Socrates, we suddenly have a blind spot: there is no indication of how Socrates is perceived by Ion. The rhapsode's capacity for focalization has been "switched off."

### 3.5 *The Hippias Maior*

Authentic or not, the *Hippias Maior* displays a narrative strategy closely similar to what we witnessed in the case of the *Ion*. The dialogue opens with Socrates meeting the famous sophist Hippias: "It is Hippias, the beautiful and wise! What a long while it is since you came to anchor at Athens!" (281a1–2). Hippias explains that he was too busy on diplomatic missions on behalf of his native Elis. A series of questions and answers follows, until Socrates, and with him the reader, eventually concentrate on the dialogue's main subject, the definition of the beautiful. In the course of the discussion we, again together with Socrates, are further informed that, following the request of Eudicus the son of Apemantus,[23] Hippias promised to repeat in Athens ("in the schoolroom of Pheidostratus") the discourse he had recently delivered in Sparta (286b).

At one point Socrates issues a brief reference to Hippias' sumptuous attire (291a6–7 "you who are so beautifully clad, so beautifully shod"); on another, he remarks that his interlocutor gets angry whenever their opinions diverge (302a). Hippias' behaviour throughout the dialogue amply confirms this assessment; yet, just as with Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1, Socrates mediates and eventually neutralizes everything Hippias says about Socrates and his arguments (cf. below, pp. 107–108). Consider, for example, Socrates' reaction to Hippias' sharp criticism of his method:

> But your frequent admonitions are a help to us. This time, for example, before these admonitions from you about the stupid way we operate, shall I make a still greater display, and tell you what we had in mind about them? Or not tell? (301c6–d1; tr. P. Woodruff)

22 Nothing is known of Ion beyond what we learn from this dialogue; see Nails 2002: 175.

23 On Eudicus see below, p. 63.

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As a result, Socrates emerges as the sole focus of perception, the one through whom his opponent's opinions are filtered.

•••

As distinct from what we observed in the case of the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus*, in the *Ion* and the *Hippias Maior* the story is not mediated "through the voices of the characters, who both focalize and speak," and the reader is not given the option "to see and interpret things for himself without being guided to understand them in a particular way" (Kaklamanou and Pavlou, with n. 20 above). All options for perceiving the conversations between Socrates and Ion and between Socrates and Hippias differently from how Socrates perceived them are blocked. As a corollary, the reader is also deprived of the opportunity to empathize with Socrates' opponents. Indeed, even if they often express themselves in an awkward and self-serving way,[24] both Euthyphro and Crito genuinely care for Socrates, a feature that humanizes them and renders the treatment they receive at Socrates' hands much less devastating than what we observe in the case of Ion and Hippias.[25]

The comparison of the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus* on the one hand with the *Ion* and the *Hippias Maior* on the other demonstrates that the *Theaetetus* is neither the first nor the only dramatic dialogue in which the narratorial authority has been delegated to the bearer of a single focus of perception to produce the effect of implicit narrator. But this comparison also shows that Plato's propensity for unilateral focalization should not be taken for granted. This must have been a deliberately chosen and, as we shall see immediately, a consistently pursued narrative strategy that the *Theaetetus*' thematization of an implicit first-person narrator justified retroactively. This gives us sufficient reason to proceed with examination of the other dramatic dialogues along the same lines.

## 4 An Implicit Narrator-Hero (the *Cratylus*, *Meno*, *Phaedrus*, *Laws*)

In *the Ion and the Hippias Maior*, as well as in the Athenian part of the *Theaetetus* Socrates the implicit narrator is also the main character. In narratological

24 See esp. *Cri*. 45d8–46a4, with Beversluis 2000: 59; Danzig 2010: 80.

25 See Beversluis 2000: 163, quoting Jowett: "whatever his intellectual and personal shortcomings, Euthyphro 'is not a bad man.'" On a defense of Crito and the common-sense validity of his arguments see Beversluis 2000: 59–74.

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terms, he is an autodiegetic narrator, or narrator-hero (above, p. 17). As we shall see in this section, this is also the role he plays in the *Cratylus*, the *Meno*, and the *Phaedrus*, while the *Laws* introduces an implicit autodiegetic narrator who is not Socrates. Let us examine these dialogues one by one.

### 4.1 *The Cratylus*

Hermogenes invites Socrates to join in a discussion on the correctness of names that Hermogenes and Cratylus led before his arrival.[26] The dialogue begins thus:

> "Suppose that we make Socrates a party to the argument?" "If you please." "I should explain to you, Socrates, that Cratylus here has been arguing that there is a correct name (*onomatos orthotēta*), supplied by nature, for each one of the existing things." (383a1–5)

As the conversation proceeds, Socrates the newcomer assumes the role of the leading interlocutor and the moderator of the discussion.[27]

No zooming-in occurs in the opening of the *Cratylus*. As already mentioned, the dialogue starts "with the second act" (p. 49), that is, in the middle of an ongoing discussion. Until he hears Hermogenes' explanation, Socrates is unaware of the subject of the discussion led before his arrival (cf. Pythodorus' ignorance in the *Parmenides*). Socrates' lack of knowledge is shared by the reader, which means that the scope of the dialogue is limited by Socrates' personal experience (cf. above, p. 43, on external focalization).

The only reference to the setting, which emerges at the very end of the dialogue, is also by Socrates:

> Then, another day, my friend, when you come back, you shall give me a lesson; but at present, go into the country, as you are intending, and Hermogenes will set you on your way … (440e3–5)

As we saw above, such registering of the characters' intentions and movements is one of the narrator's prerogatives. Since Socrates is also the one whose experience circumscribes the scope of the narrative, there seems to be sufficient

26 Hermogenes of Alopece, a member of the Socratic circle, was among those present at the death of Socrates (*Phd.* 59b7); Hermogenes was Xenophon's main source for the last years of Socrates' life. Cratylus son of Smicrion, a follower of Heraclitus, was one of the philosophical influences on the young Plato (Aristot. *Meta.* 987a32–b1). See further Nails 2002: 162–64, 105–106.

27 On Socrates' metanarrative comments in this dialogue see below, n. 27 to Chapter 6.

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reason to conclude that Socrates is envisaged as the dialogue's focus of perception and accordingly its implicit narrator.

### 4.2 *The Meno*

In the *Meno*, the delayed disclosure of the fact that Anytus, in whose house the encounter between Meno and Socrates takes place, is also present at the conversation,[28] serves as a litmus test for who should be considered the dialogue's implicit narrator. Precisely in mid-dialogue Socrates suddenly says: "Here we fortunately have sitting by us Anytus, whom we should make a participant in our enquiry" (89e9–10).[29] Socrates proceeds with a detailed account of Anytus' father, education, and social standing (90ab). Anytus' house guest Meno is hardly in need of this kind of information: Socrates is introducing Anytus to the readers of the dialogue.

An animated discussion follows, and again it is Socrates who registers Anytus' emotional state as he perceives it: "O Meno, it seems to me that Anytus is in a rage."[30] This matches the way Socrates registers his interlocutors' emotional responses in the dialogues where his narratorial authority is explicit. Compare the following passages from Plato's narrated texts: "It seemed to me that he [Critias] became angry with him" or "It seemed to me that Protagoras was getting ruffled and excited."[31] Both are unambiguous examples of the narrator's text that validate Socrates' narratorial authority in the dialogues in which they appear.

Like the *Cratylus*, the *Meno* begins *in medias res*, with no description of the setting or zooming-in. Nevertheless, whatever background information there is, it is invariably supplied by Socrates. This concerns not only Socrates' introduction of Anytus in the middle of the dialogue but also his references to Meno's Thessalian background and his studies with Gorgias that emerge in the dialogue's opening (70a5-b5), and as the dialogue proceeds his acknowledgement of Meno's physical beauty (76b5). This also concerns Socrates' announcement, typical of Plato's narrators (above, with n. 15), of his leaving the

28 Meno the Thessalian, represented here as a youth, was one of the leaders of The Ten Thousand, the army of Greek mercenaries at the service of Cyrus the Younger immortalized by Xenophon in the *Anabasis*. Anytus was a prominent Athenian politician and one of Socrates' prosecutors; see further Nails 2002: 204–205, 37–38.

29 Ἄνυτος ὅδε ("Anytus here") at 89e10, 90a1. Contrary to Nails 2002: 38, Anytus is presented as attending the conversation to its end, see Ἄνυτος ὅδε and τόνδε Ἄνυτον at 99e2 and 100b8 respectively.

30 *Meno* 95a2 μοι δοκεῖ χαλεπαίνειν, echoed by Meno at the end of the dialogue, see 99e2 καίτοι ἴσως Ἄνυτος ὅδε σοι ἄχθεται λέγοντι. On focalization by characters see above, p. 42.

31 *Chrm.* 162d2 ἀλλά μοι ἔδοξεν ὀργισθῆναι αὐτῷ; *Prt.* 333e2–3 μοι ἐδόκει ὁ Πρωταγόρας ἤδη τετραχύνθαι τε καὶ ἀγωνιᾶν.

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stage at the end of the dialogue (100b7). All foregoing indicate unequivocally that Socrates is envisaged here as focalizing the dialogue in its entirety. This puts him in the position of the bearer of the narratorial authority in the *Meno*.

### 4.3 *The Phaedrus*

Just as his acknowledgment of Anytus' presence in the *Meno* points firmly at Socrates as the dialogue's implicit narrator, Socrates' visualization of the pastoral landscape by the Ilissus River unambiguously indicates who should be seen as the implicit narrator of the *Phaedrus*.

> By Hera, a fair resting place! Here is this lofty and spreading plane-tree, and the agnus is high and clustering and, being in full blossom, it seems to spread the greatest fragrance over the place; and the stream which flows beneath the plane-tree is deliciously cold to the feet. Judging from the figurines and images, this must be a spot sacred to Achelous and some Nymphs. How delightful is the breeze – so very sweet; and there is a sound in the air shrill and summerlike which makes answer to the chorus of the cicadas. But the greatest charm of all is the grass, like a pillow gently sloping to the head. (230b2–c4; cf. 258c6–259a2)

From the moment he – and we – first cast a look at the plane-tree under which the conversation will take place,[32] Socrates makes us perceive the dialogue's scenery exactly as he does – even more so as he rarely leaves the city and is therefore, like us, new to the landscape he describes (230c6–d3). Small wonder that his description involves all the senses – vision, hearing, smell, and touch.

But Socrates' role as the dialogues' focus of perception is not confined to the descriptions of landscape. From the moment he focalizes Phaedrus in the dialogue's opening,[33] Socrates continually visualizes not only the setting of the *Phaedrus* but also the behavior of the characters and communicates this information to the reader. He describes Phaedrus hiding under his cloak the manuscript of Lysias' speech (228d6–7 "but you must first of all show to me what you have in your left hand under your cloak"); Phaedrus' delight with it (234d3–5 "I observed you while reading to be in an ecstasy"); his own covering of his head before his first speech (237a4 "I will veil my face"); his nearly crossing the Ilissus in order to return to Athens after the speech has ended (242a1 "I will cross the river and make my way home") and stopping at the last moment (242b8–9

32 See *Phdr*. 229a9–b2, Phaedrus to Socrates, "Do you see the tallest plane-tree in the distance? … There are shade and gentle breezes and grass on which we may either sit or lie down."

33 *Phdr*. 227a1–3 "My dear Phaedrus, where you come from and where are you going?" "From Lysias the son of Cephalus, and I am going to take a walk outside the wall."

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"As I was about to cross the stream the usual sign appeared to me"); his delivering his second speech with his face uncovered (243b6–7 "And this I will attempt, not as before, veiled and ashamed, but with my head bare"). These and other descriptions reach the reader through the mediation of Socrates, the only character in the dialogue who focalizes it from beginning to end.[34]

### 4.4 *The Laws*

In the *Laws*, a dialogue from which Socrates is absent, the narrative is focalized through the Athenian Stranger (Plato in disguise?), who is also the dialogue's leading interlocutor. He begins with a series of questions that allow the reader to absorb the information concerning the identities of his two interlocutors, Cleinias the Cretan and Megillus the Lacedaemonian.[35] Further on, he makes it clear that the conversation takes place in Crete and that its participants are old men:

> On our way we can pass the time pleasantly in talking about constitution and laws, for I am told that the distance from Cnosus to the cave and temple of Zeus is considerable; and doubtless along the way there are shady places under the lofty trees, which will protect us from this scorching sun. Being no longer young, we may often stop to rest beneath them, and get over the whole journey without difficulty, beguiling the time by conversation. (625a6–b7)

In an unmistakably *Phaedrus*-oriented passage, Cleinias completes the picture by supplying the guests from abroad with additional information:

> Yes, Stranger, and if we proceed onward we shall come to groves of cypresses, which are of rare height and beauty, and there are green meadows, in which we may repose and converse. (625b8–c2, cf. 229a9–b2)[36]

Similar to the *Phaedrus* again, on two occasions the Athenian Stranger makes the reader aware of the time of the day.[37] Sparse as they are, the markers of

34 Phaedrus' contribution is his revealing that not only Socrates but also he himself is barefoot (229a4–5) and his referring to the time of the day at 242a3–5 and 279b5–6 (at 258e6–259a7, Socrates does this). See above, p. 42, on focalization by characters.

35 Both are probably fictional. Nails 2002: 197–98, is ambivalent as regards the historicity of the latter.

36 Cf. *Phdr*. 229a9–b2, quoted in n. 32 above.

37 *Laws* 722c7–9 "All this time, from early dawn until noon, have we been talking about laws in this charming retreat" and 811c7–8 "the words which we have spoken from early dawn until now."

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focalization appearing in the *Laws* leave no room for doubt as to the identity of the bearer of narratorial authority in this dialogue.

To recapitulate, the *Cratylus*, the *Meno,* the *Phaedrus*, and the *Laws*, along with the *Ion*, the *Hippias Maior*, and the Athenian part of the *Theaetetus* discussed in the previous sections, are dramatic dialogues whose implicit narrator is conceived of in the same way as the explicit narrator of the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, and the *Republic*, namely as a character who focalizes the dialogue in its entirety. As in the *Charmides*, the *Lysis,* and the *Republic* again, these dialogues' implicit narrator is also their leading character (the autodiegetic narrator, or narrator-hero). In other dramatic dialogues, a different model of narrator is adopted.

## 5 An Implicit Narrator-Observer (the *Hippias Minor*, *Laches*, *Gorgias, Philebus*)

Although Socrates appears in all Plato's dialogues except the *Laws*, this does not mean that he should a priori be considered the implicit narrator of every single dramatic dialogue at our disposal. Just as in the narrated *Parmenides*, in the dramatic *Hippias Minor*, *Laches*, *Gorgias,* and *Philebus* Socrates acts as a character in a narrative focalized by someone else.

### 5.1 *The Hippias Minor*

As in the *Hippias Maior*, this dialogue describes an encounter between Socrates and the renowned sophist Hippias. Nevertheless, it is the otherwise unknown Eudicus son of Apemantus[38] who opens the conversation:

> Why are you silent, Socrates, after the magnificent display which Hippias has been making? Why do you not either refute his words, if he seems to you to have been wrong in any point, or join with us in commending him? There is the more reason why you should speak, for we, who may fairly claim to take part in a philosophical discussion (*tēs en philosophiai diatribēs*), are now alone. (363a1–5)

Eudicus initiates the encounter and negotiates its terms (363a-c, cf. 364 b, 373a). He also describes the conversation's setting (363a3–4 "we are now

38 Eudicus (whose father Apemantus is presented at 363b1–5 as an interpreter of Homer) is referred to in *Hp. mai.* 286c as the man who invited Hippias to perform in Athens. Eudicus is attested in these two dialogues alone; see Nails 2002: 146.

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alone," etc.).[39] Finally, he mediates between the antagonists at the critical stage of the discussion (373ac). On the other hand, in contrast to his behavior in the other dramatic dialogues treated so far, the Socrates of the *Hippias Minor* is not presented as focalizing the conversation. The only occasion when he comes fairly close to that is his remark "but now that there are not so many of us, and my friend Eudicus bids me ask, I wish you would tell me …" (364b8–9): this not only echoes Eudicus' words to the same effect (above) but also points again to Eudicus as a mediator. On one occasion, Socrates is focalized by Hippias, but even this is done through Eudicus' mediation: "But then, Eudicus, Socrates is always troublesome in an argument and he looks as if he is meaning some mischief" (373b4–5). With all this taken into account, it seems reasonable to conclude that the dialogue's focus of perception is Eudicus and that the dialogue is delivered to the reader through his mediation.

The *Hippias Minor* is a short dialogue (slightly more than 12 Stephanus pages). The presence of the third speaker is unusual for the dialogues of this category. In view of this it seems likely that the main reason for introducing Eudicus was to prevent Socrates from being too closely associated with the paradoxical conclusion he reaches at the end of the dialogue, namely that the good man is the one who voluntarily does wrong (376b4–6). Socrates' conclusion is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the sophistic thesis that virtue is a skill (*technē*) like any other.[40] But Eudicus misses the point, and as later attempts to present the dialogue as spurious owing to its content show, successfully communicates his perplexity to the readers. This is largely due to his impartiality, by virtue of which the opinions of the two opponents are presented as being of equal weight. We are very close here to the bifocality of the *Euthyphro,* the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus* (see further below, p. 109).

As we have seen, Eudicus is a mediating figure. Mediating characters introduced in dramatic texts to create an overarching perspective have been thoroughly discussed by Manfres Pfister in his authoritative analysis of drama. Pfister's example of such a character is the Singer in Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, about whom he comments as follows: "This figure is placed above the action and the figures that he reports on, and the parable is presented as if it had been produced by him."[41] This comes very close indeed to the position of Eudicus in the *Hippias Minor*.

39 Echoed by Socrates at 364b8–9 (below). Cf. *Menex*. 236d1–2, "since the two of us are alone," and above, p. 55.
40 Similarly Kahn 1996: 118.
41 Pfister 1988: 59–60.

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## 5.2 *The Laches*

Two prominent Athenian citizens, Lysimachus and Melesias, have invited two distinguished generals, Nicias and Laches, to attend a public demonstration of fighting in full armor. The purpose of the invitation was to seek the generals' advice regarding the appropriate education of the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias, more particularly to help them decide whether training in this military art may contribute to the purpose. The conversation among the four begins immediately on the show's ending, with Lysimachus doingt most of the speaking (178a-180b). "But why, instead of consulting us, do you not consult Socrates here (*Sōkratē de tonde*) about the education of the youths?" Laches asks after a while (180b7–c1). Although Socrates has not yet joined in the conversation, Laches' remark makes it clear that he is supposed to be present among the people who have just watched the performance.

Lysimachus[42] is an old man; he was a friend of Socrates' father Sophroniscus, but he knows little about Socrates himself: this "initial ignorance" (above, p. 21) closely parallels Socrates' position vis-à-vis his younger interlocutors both in the dramatic *Theaetetus* and the narrated *Charmides* and *Lysis*. Nicias assures him that Socrates proved very helpful in recommending Damon as a music teacher for his sons (180c8–d3). At this point, Lysimachus directly addresses Socrates. He praises Socrates' father; he also recalls that his own son and the son of Melesias often talk about Socrates, praising him most highly. Lysimachus' son confirms that this is the same Socrates who was the object of the youths' admiration (180d4–181a3). Laches interferes again, to add that Socrates was his companion in the retreat from Delium, where he distinguished himself highly (181a7–b4). Lysimachus is impressed, and he asks Socrates to give his opinion as to the educational value of fighting in full armor (181b5–c1). This is where Socrates speaks for the first time (181d1–7).

As Charles Kahn has pointed out, "The *Laches* is unique among Socratic dialogues in that Socrates is not a participant in the opening conversation, and several pages of text must be perused before he intervenes."[43] We saw indeed that, although Socrates is apparently envisaged as being present among the post-show crowd, the *Laches* starts as a private conversation between two pairs of interlocutors, and Socrates joins it only after having been summoned – so much so that Lysimachus finds it necessary to recapitulate for him the gist of the previous discussion (181c7–9). This obviously precludes Socrates from being treated as the dialogue's focus of perception.

42 Son of the great Aristides, disadvantageously compared with his father here (179c) and at *Meno* 94a. See further Nails 2002: 194.

43 Kahn 1996: 151.

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Everything points in the direction that rather than *through* Socrates, the *Laches* is focalized *on* him. Socrates is introduced to Lysimachus several times – by Nicias, by Laches, by Lysimachus' son, and it is through Lysimachus' perception that Socrates' accomplishments are revealed. "That is very high praise which is accorded to you, Socrates," Lysimachus says, "by faithful witnesses and for actions like those which they praise. Let me tell you the pleasure which I feel in hearing of your fame; and I hope that you will regard me as one of your warmest friends" (181b5–c1).[44]

Just like Socrates in the narrated dialogues, Lysimachus is the one who in the dialogue's opening makes the reader aware of the setting of the conversation (178a1–2 "You have seen the exhibition of the man fighting in armour, Nicias and Laches"). It is true of course that he withdraws to the background at a relatively early stage: "I will therefore beg of you to carry on the proposed discussion by yourselves; and I will listen, and Melesias and I will act upon your conclusions" (189d1–3). Yet he re-emerges at the end of the dialogue, announcing his decision to invite Socrates to his house to further consult him on the education of the two youths (201b6–c3).

Lysimachus is thus the character through whom the dialogue is focalized in its entirety. As we have seen, such macro-focalization is the prerogative of the narrator (above, p. 42). It should be concluded, therefore, that Lysimachus is the implicit narrator-observer of the *Laches*. At the same time, he is far from being an impartial narrator, on a par with the narrator-observer we encountered in the *Hippias Minor*. Even though Lysimachus, like Eudicus of the *Hippias Minor*, plays the part of arbiter, the dialogue's conclusion leaves no room for doubt about the identity of the speaker he sides with. This attitude will also be found in the other dialogues featuring narrator-observer.

### 5.3 *The Gorgias*

Socrates[45] and Chaerephon meet Callicles[46] at the entrance to the latter's house, only to discover that they have just missed the display of rhetorical art by Callicles' guest, the great sophist Gorgias. This is the fault of Chaerephon, who detained Socrates in the Agora. "'Tis no matter, Socrates," Chaerephon interferes,

44 Cf. Kahn, 1996: 151: "By selecting an initial speaker, Lysimachus, to whom Socrates need to be introduced, Plato has created an occasion for the two generals, Laches and Nicias, to sing his praises as an outstanding citizen-soldier with a special interest in the education of the young."

45 The plot structure of the dialogue is analyzed in detail in Chapter 6.

46 An ambitious young politician whose historicity has been questioned. Socrates' friend Chaerephon also appears in the *Charmides* and the pseudo-Platonic *Halcyon*; he is mentioned in Plato's *Apology* (20e8–21a8), in Xenophon and in Attic comedy; see further Nails 2002: 75–77, 86–87.

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"for I can supply the remedy too. Gorgias is a friend of mine, and will treat us to another display, now, if you want, or if not, later" (447b1–3).[47]

Callicles assures Socrates that Gorgias will answer his questions, and the three enter the house. There they meet Gorgias and his disciple Polus, surrounded, as we shall learn later, by a large audience. Socrates urges Chaerephon to ask Gorgias whether he is willing to take questions, but Gorgias is tired, and Polus suggests that he answer Chaerephon's questions himself. The exchange between Chaerephon and Polus (447a-449c) serves as a prelude to the dialogue, giving the first glimpse of the subsequent discussion.[48] The moment the discussion between Socrates and Gorgias starts, Chaerephon withdraws into the background.

Yet Chaerephon of the *Gorgias* is far from being merely an episodic character. Note that the entire dialogue is explicitly set as Chaerephon's remedy (*pharmakon*) for the presentation he and Socrates have missed. Chaerephon's special role twice comes to the fore again. First, at one of the structural breaks, Gorgias, wishing to end the discussion, expresses his concern that the audience may lose patience if he and Socrates proceed. Chaerephon is he who acknowledges the presence of the audience and registers their reaction:

> You yourselves hear the audience cheering (*thorubou … akouete*), Gorgias and Socrates, which shows their desire to listen to you; as for myself, Heaven forbid that I should have any business on hand which would take me away from a discussion (*logōn*) so interesting and so ably maintained. (458c3–7)

Chaerephon's description of the audience's reaction[49] uses the same language as the analogous descriptions by Plato's explicit narrators. Thus, in the narrated part of the *Euthydemus*, whose narrator is Socrates, we find: "At these words those followers of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, like a chorus at the bidding of their director, laughed and cheered (*anethorubēsan*)" (276b6–c1); "Then once more the admirers of the two men, in an ecstasy at their wisdom, gave vent to another peal of laughter and cheers (*ethorubēsan*)" (276d1–2);

47 Tr. W. D. Woodhead. As Dodds 1959: 189–90, has pointed out, Chaerephon's words probably allude to Euripides' *Telephus*, whose protagonist was destined to find a remedy for his wound in the very weapon that had inflicted it. See also above, n. 2, on a slightly different construction of the setting.

48 Cf. Dodds 1959: 188: "a first lesson in dialectical method." See also below, p. 138.

49 At *Grg*. 473e2–3 Socrates registers Polus' laughter as a reaction to his argument, which causes Polus to appeal to the audience (473e5 "ask the company"), thereby acknowledging its presence for the second time; this is reiterated by Gorgias at 506a8–b3; see further below, p. 106. On focalization by characters see above, p. 42.

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"Up to now only Euthydemus' partisans had cheered (*ethorubēsan*) at each successive hit, but now even the columns of the Lyceum echoed their uproar (*ethorubēsan*) and delight" (303b3–7). The *Protagoras* and the *Symposium* exhibit a similar pattern: "When he had given this answer, the company cheered him (*anethorubēsan*)"; "When Agathon had done speaking, Aristodemus said that there was a cheer of those present" (*anathorubēsai*).[50]

The second time Chaerephon appears is again at one of the dialogue's turning points. The discussion between Socrates and Polus has ended with Socrates' counter-intuitive claim that doing wrong and not being punished is the worst fate that can befall a person. "Tell me, Chaerephon, is Socrates in earnest or is he joking?" Callicles bursts in, thus emphasizing again Chaerephon's role as the mediator. Note that Chaerephon's position is authoritative enough to allow him to confirm that this is indeed what Socrates meant to say: "I should say, Callicles, that he is in most profound earnest; but you may well ask him" (481b6–9). This is the point where the discussion between Socrates and Callicles, the last and the most significant among the dialogue's three verbal duels, begins.

Chaerephon is present on the stage all the time. He both inaugurates the discussion and mediates between the speakers, and it is through him that we first learn about the audience's reaction to the discussion that takes place in the dialogue. All this affords sufficient reason to conclude that the *Gorgias* is focalized through Chaerephon and that it is Chaerephon who is envisaged as its implicit narrator. To use Genette's example, he is the one who should be regarded as the dialogue's "transparent (but inquisitive) Dr. Watson" (Chapter 2, p. 41).

As in the *Laches*, the person on whom the dialogue is focalized is Socrates. Note indeed that the *Gorgias* culminates in Socrates' programmatic defense of his choice of a life of philosophical contemplation and in the expression of his awareness that this choice may well cost him his life.[51] This strongly suggests that Chaerephon of the *Gorgias* belongs with those narrators-observers – for example, Aristodemus of the *Symposium* or Phaedo of the *Phaedo* – who are Socrates' close associates and whose accounts are purported, among other things, vividly to recreate his image and to justify the choices he made (see also below, p. 166).

50 *Prt*. 334c7–8; *Symp*. 198a1–2. On the *Euthydemus*, the *Protagoras*, and the *Symposium* see below, Chapter 4.

51 *Grg*. 521c-522e. Cf. Dodds 1959: 368: "In choosing his manner of life Socrates chose also his manner of death, and chose it with his eyes open. It is not an argument calculated to convince Callicles, and it does not convince him."

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## 5.4 *The Philebus*

The *Philebus* stands apart from the other dramatic dialogues in that it is focalized neither through its protagonist Socrates nor through a bystander, but through Socrates' main interlocutor. Consider the opening words of the dialogue: "Look (*horā*), Protarchus, what kind of argument you are about to take from Philebus at this moment, and what the other argument is which I maintain" (11a1–2). The phrase unambiguously points to Socrates' addressee as the dialogue's focus of perception: Protarchus is the one who "looks."[52]

Protarchus, a student of the hedonist Philebus,[53] is supposed to defend his teacher's position that pleasure is the good as against Socrates' initial thesis that privileges knowledge alone. Protarchus' gradual understanding of and identification with the nuanced solution Socrates proposes provides most of the action.[54] Expressions of cognition and perception abound, all relating to Protarchus.[55]

Protarchus is also the one who regularly alerts the reader to Philebus' presence and his role in the discussion;[56] makes us aware of the group of young people present on the occasion and of their responses;[57] does not let Socrates

52 He is also the character who, his youth notwithstanding, moderates the discussion, see, e.g., 18a, 19a, 20a, 28b, 28d, 31b, 32d, 34c, 46b, 50e.

53 "Philebus' boy," see *Phlb*. 16b4–5, 36d6–7. He is also a student of Gorgias; see 58a7–8. Nothing certain can be said of Philebus or Protarchus beyond what is found in Plato's dialogue (Nails 2002: 238, 257), but it is hard to avoid the impression that, by making Socrates address Protarchus as "son of Callias" (19b5, cf. 36d6–7), Plato had in mind the famous admirer of the Sophists who acts as their generous host in the *Protagoras* (see n. 8 to Chapter 2). Cf. also Meinwald 2008: 485–86.

54 See the comprehensive analysis by Dorothea Frede in D. Frede 1996; on the "double elenchus" of the *Philebus* see Davidson 2013 [1990]: 9–11.

55 *Phlb*. 45d6–7 "I understood (ἔμαθον) what you say, and see (ὁρῶ) that there is a great difference between them [moderate and immoderate pleasures]"; 49c6–7 "the mixture of pleasures and pains is not as yet manifest (καταφανής) to me"; 51d4–5 "I am trying, Socrates; do try in your turn to speak even more clearly (σαφέστερον)"; 51e6 "I perceive" (κατανοῶ); 53e2 "Yet a third time I must say: speak more clearly (σαφέστερον), Socrates"; 53e8 "Your many repetitions make me slow to understand" (μόγις ἔμαθον); finally, 57c6–7 "We have got far enough, Socrates, to discern an astonishingly big difference between kinds of knowledge in respect of precision (εἰς θαυμαστὸν διαφορᾶς μέγεθος εἰς σαφήνειαν προεληλύθαμεν ἐπιστημῶν)" (tr. R. Hackforth, slightly adapted).

56 *Phlb*. 11c7–8 "Our excellent Philebus has refused to take part"; 12a9 "You, Philebus, have handed over the argument to me"; 12b4–6 "And now, Socrates, either with or without Philebus' blessing, we will proceed with the argument"; 15c8–9 "Philebus, fortunately for us, is not disposed to move, and we had better not stir him with questions."

57 *Phlb*. 12b3–4 "We will be the witnesses (συμμάρτυρες) of your words"; 15c7 "all of us"; 16a4–5 "Considering, Socrates, how many we are, and that all of us are young men"; 20a4–5 "If we are unable to do that, you must do it, as you have promised"; 29b1–2 "For truly the storm gathers over us, and we are at our wits' end (ὑπ' ἀπορίας)"; 67b8–9 "And now, Socrates, all of us agree that what you have been saying are the most truthful things of all."

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depart before the argument has been completed (19de, 23b, 50cd, 67b). The last words of the dialogue, registering Socrates' leaving the stage, also are his. Protarchus is the dialogue's focus of perception, the one through whose mediation the reader copes with the argument's difficulties and arrives at the solution. This is emphasized by the fact that throughout the dialogue Protarchus acts as a spokesman for a group of young people who attentively follow the discussion (cf. n. 57 above).

The overall effect produced by this change of focus is that, rather than being dominated by a senior and more authoritative interlocutor – a situation we are all too familiar with from other Platonic dialogues – Protarchus acts as Socrates' full-scale partner. As Dorothea Frede put it,

> Although Socrates firmly directs the discussion, the investigation remains a co-operative investigation throughout, and it is Protarchus who confirms the final selection of the pleasures and the kinds of knowledge appropriate for the good life.[58]

One can only wonder how *Republic* 2–10 would have looked like if there too the focus of perception had moved in the direction of Glaucon or Adeimantus.[59] It indeed seems reasonable to suggest that, like the other late dialogues, the *Philebus*, with its peculiar characteristics unparalleled in the rest of the corpus, was largely an experimental dialogue.[60]

## 6 Socrates as an Implicit Narrator-Observer (the *Sophist, Statesman, Timaeus, Critias*)

Four late dialogues form a homogeneous group, in that they negotiate their implicit narrator along the same lines.

– In the *Sophist*, Socrates meets Theodorus and Theaetetus on the day following the conversation described in the *Theaetetus*, presumably at the same place.[61] Theodorus and Theaetetus bring with them a stranger from Elea,

58 D. Frede 1996: 223.

59 On Glaucon and Adeimantus as Socrates' interlocutors see Blondell 2002: 199–214, and below, Chapter 5.

60 Cf. Rowe 1996: 173, on Plato's late dialogues: "It will be safer to explain variations between one dialogue and another by reference to Plato's continuing to experiment, or simply making different choices of strategy, within his chosen form." Cf. also Rutherford 1995: 276–81 and below, pp. 118–20.

61 *Tht*. 210d4; *Soph*. 216a1–2.

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a disciple of Parmenides and Zeno, and Socrates asks him to examine and adequately to define the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. The Stranger agrees, and Socrates suggests he take Theaetetus as his interlocutor. The rest of the dialogue is an exchange between the Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus. The dialogue is presented as the first installment in a trilogy.

– In the *Statesman*, the conversation started in the *Sophist* continues on the same day.[62] The cast of characters is the same as in the *Sophist*, but this time the interlocutor of the Eleatic Stranger is Socrates' namesake, the Younger Socrates,[63] who was a silent bystander in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*.
– In the *Timaeus*, Socrates meets Critias and his guests Timaeus and Hermocrates[64] the day after he has delivered a discourse on what is supposed to represent a version of the *Republic*. After Socrates' recapitulation of the main points of the yesterday's discussion, the company decides to continue it in a series of presentations. The first speaker is Timaeus the astronomer, whose subject is the generation of the world.
– In the unfinished *Critias*, the conversation that started in the *Timaeus* continues. The argument is handed over to Critias.[65]

Who is the implicit narrator of the *Sophist*, the *Statesman,* the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias*? As we have seen, the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are intertextually linked with the *Theaetetus* in that they are presented as its sequels.[66] Since Plato unambiguously indicates that the implicit narrator of the *Theaetetus* is Socrates, this strongly suggests that Socrates is envisaged as an implicit narrator in these two dialogues as well (cf. above, p. 7). In a similar manner, the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* are presented as sequels to a version of the *Republic*, a dialogue in which, again, Socrates is the first-person narrator.[67]

62 *Plt*. 258a3–4.

63 A member of the Academy, referred to in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1036b 25) and in Plato's (spurious) *Letter* 11, see Nails 2002: 269.

64 *Ti.* 17b-19a, 26de. Timaeus of Locri in South Italy is known only from Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*. Hermocrates of Syracusae was a prominent Sicilian leader and the architect of the Athenian defeat in Sicily in 415–413 BCE. See further Nails 2002: 293, 161–62. The Critias of the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* is probably not the same person as the Critias of the *Charmides* and the *Protagoras*; on the latter see above, n. 13 to Chapter 2.

65 *Cri.* 106b6–7.

66 This does not mean that the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* were written immediately after the *Theaetetus*. Cf. Kahn 2013: 94: "A significant change in style suggests that a considerable lapse of time may have occurred between the composition of these two dialogues [the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*]. Nevertheless, the reappearance of Theaetetus as interlocutor in the *Sophist* is a clear reminder of continuity in this project." See also the discussion in M. Frede 1996: 145–48.

67 This would be equally true of the version of the *Republic* recapitulated at the beginning of the *Timaeus*; see *Ti.* 20b1–2: "And therefore yesterday when I saw that you wanted me to

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As distinct from the *Theaetetus* and the *Republic*, however, Socrates plays no significant part in the dialogues that are set as their continuations. Among Plato's late dialogues, only the *Philebus* features Socrates as the leading interlocutor.[68] The other dialogues display a steady tendency to transfer this role to another character – the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, Timaeus and Critias in the eponymous dialogues.[69] The culmination of this tendency is found in the *Laws*, from which Socrates is absent.

In the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias* Socrates is pushed into the background. After setting the stage for the forthcoming discussion, he turns into a silent listener whose participation is no longer necessary for the argument's progress. This seems to imply that it was important for Plato to ensure Socrates' presence even in the dialogues in which he plays no significant part. The explanation that suggests itself is that this allowed him to position Socrates as an eyewitness to the discussion and, consequently, as the dialogue's focus of perception. If correct, this would mean that Socrates' position in these dialogues is that of an implicit narrator-observer on whose personal experience the story delivered in the dialogue is based (compare Pythodorus' position in the *Parmenides* and Lysimachus' position in the *Laches*).

In each of the four dialogues under review, signals of narratorial authority abound. All are concentrated in the dialogues' openings, and all unambiguously point to Socrates. Thus, the *Sophist* begins with Socrates perceiving the arrival of the three other interlocutors at the meeting place. Theodorus introduces the Eleatic Stranger:

> Here we are, Socrates, true to our agreement of yesterday; and we bring with us a stranger from Elea, who is a disciple of Parmenides and Zeno, and a true philosopher. (216a1–4)

Socrates' reaction to the newcomer's appearance further enhances the latter's status: "Is he not rather a god, Theodorus, whom, as in Homer, you bring to us in the disguise of a stranger?" (216a5–6).[70] The gradual introduction of the Eleatic Stranger is of course yet another example of the zooming-in procedure, widely attested in both narrated and dramatic dialogues.

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describe the constitution of the State (τὰ περὶ τῆς πολιτείας διελθεῖν), I readily assented." For a concise but informative discussion of the relation of this version to Plato's *Republic* see Cornford 1937: 4–5. Cf. also Guthrie 1978: 245 with n. 1; Thesleff 1982: 251–52. On the intertextual aspects involved see McCabe 2008: 109–1; Erler 2015: 95–100.

68 But not as the dialogue's implicit narrator; see the previous section.

69 On the self-referential aspect of this strategy see Sedley 1995: 5–6.

70 For a discussion of the Stranger's anonymity and lack of physicality see Blondell 2002: 318–26, esp. 323–24.

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Socrates is also the one who establishes the terms of the discussion (216d2–217a3) and proposes that the Stranger take Theaetetus as his interlocutor (217d5–7, 218a1–5). As with Pythodorus of the *Parmenides* and with Socrates of the *Cratylus*, here too the reader's knowledge is limited to Socrates' personal experience: before their arrival at the meeting, the Stranger, Theodorus and Theaetetus had conversed on issues similar to those to be discussed, but Socrates, and with him the reader, remain ignorant of the contents of their conversation (217b4–6; cf. also above, p. 59). Having made all necessary preparations, Socrates withdraws into the background as a silent bystander (cf. 216d3 "I would listen to you with pleasure").

Socrates' role in the *Statesman* is equally restricted. At the beginning of the dialogue he thanks Theodorus for introducing him to Theaetetus and the Stranger, thereby making the intertextual connection with the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*. Later he elaborates the idea that each of the two young interlocutors of the Eleatic Stranger, namely, Theaetetus in the *Sophist* and the Younger Socrates in this dialogue, is somehow related to him (257d1–258a6). He delegates his new-fangled kinsmen – his doubles, as it were[71] – to represent him in the discussions with the Eleatic Stranger, who is about to expound a new brand of dialectic. However, Socrates will watch and listen, for both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* are explicitly staged as pieces of intellectual entertainment Socrates has arranged for himself.

In the *Timaeas* and the *Critias* the idea of intellectual entertainment with Socrates as the audience is even more pronounced. The opening of the *Timaeus* is closely similar to that of the *Sophist*. Socrates greets his interlocutors – Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates – who have promised to reciprocate his earlier discourse on the State with discourses of their own. He eagerly anticipates receiving "the guest-gift of arguments" (20c1 *ta tōn logōn xenia*) promised to him: "And I, in return for my yesterday's discourse, will now rest and be a listener (*hēsuchian agonta antakouein*)" (26e7–8). At the moment of his withdrawal, "the guest-gift of arguments" becomes "the feast of arguments": "I see that I shall receive in my turn a perfect and splendid feast of arguments. And now, Timaeus, you, I suppose, should speak next, after duly calling upon the gods" (27b7–9). At this point, the dialogue becomes a monologue, more precisely, a lecture delivered by Timaeus.

In the unfinished *Critias* Socrates speaks only once, but this suffices to make it clear that his part in the dialogue was supposed to be identical to the one he had played in the *Timaeus*. After confirming the order of the speakers (Timaeus, Critias, Hermocrates), he emphasizes his position of spectator with more force and imagination than in any other dialogue:

71 On Theaetetus as Socrates' double see Blondell 2002: 260–70.

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> And now, friend Critias, I will announce to you the judgment of the theater. They are of opinion that the last poet was wonderfully successful, and that you will need a great deal of indulgence before you will be able to take his place. (108b2–7)

The unfinished trilogy *Timaeus – Critias – Hermocrates* is treated here along the lines of tragic competition whose only audience, or "theater," is Socrates. The theater metaphor not only encapsulates the role of implicit narrator-observer that Socrates plays in the four late dialogues but also presents the implicit narrator in a new role of spectator. As we shall see in Chapter 7, this is far from being merely a figure of speech.

As I have already pointed out, the Socrates of the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias* differs from the other narrators-observers in that he appears only in the opening parts of the dialogues. That is, although it is explicitly declared that he will be present throughout the conversation, Socrates' presence is not punctuated, as it is in the other dialogues, by markers of focalization running through the entire text. Implications of this new arrangement will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## 7 Conclusions

Apart from the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus*, all Plato's dramatic dialogues are negotiated as narratives with an implicit narrator. The latter is identified by the same features that characterize the explicit narrator of the narrated dialogues. Plato's implicit narrator, both narrator-hero and narrator-observer, is (a) he who perceives and describes the dialogue's setting: Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*; Eudicus in the *Hippias Minor*; Lysimachus in the *Laches*; Chaerephon in the *Gorgias*; Protarchus in the *Philebus*; the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*; (b) he who gradually focuses his attention on his principal interlocutor and the subject of the conversation (the zooming-in technique): Socrates in the *Ion*, the *Hippias Maior*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*; Lysimachus in the *Laches*; (c) he who registers the characters' physical appearance, movements, and emotional responses: Socrates in the *Hippias Maior*, the *Meno*, the *Cratylus*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*; Protarchus in the *Philebus*; the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*; (d) he whose personal experience circumscribes their scope of the narrative (explicitly demonstrated in the *Cratylus*, the *Laches*, the *Sophist*; taken for granted in the other dialogues).

This is not to say that the signals of narratorial authority are evenly distributed. They are especially dense in such dialogues as the *Phaedrus* and the *Theaetetus*

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and rather thin in the *Cratylus* and the *Statesman*. But the same is true of the dialogues with an explicit narrator. For example, it is not explicitly articulated in the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, and the *Republic* that their scope is delimited by Socrates' personal experience, whereas in the *Parmenides* Pythodorus' account has no description of the setting and does not employ the zooming-in: this, however, does not affect the positions of Socrates and Pythodorus respectively as the narrators of the dialogues in question. The evidence is cumulative, and it attests unequivocally that the overwhelming majority of Plato's dramatic dialogues exhibit a single focus of perception coinciding with the position of the explicit narrator in the narrated dialogues. This single focus of perception, arising from the sum of the markers of focalization attributed to one character to the exclusion of the others, allows us to isolate the template of the implicit narrator in Plato's dramatic dialogues.[72]

Like the explicit narrator of the narrated dialogues, the implicit narrator of the dramatic dialogues is conceived as the first-person narrator who may or may not be the dialogue's leading character. Socrates the implicit narrator of the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias* is merely an observer, therefore of a different status from Socrates the implicit narrator-hero of the *Ion*, the *Hippias Maior*, the *Cratylus*, the *Meno*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Theaetetus*, whereas the implicit narrators-observers of the *Hippias Minor*, the *Laches*, the *Gorgias*, and the *Philebus* are persons other than Socrates.

Finally, again just as in the narrated dialogues, in the dramatic dialogues the narrator's text is often placed at the turning points of the discussion (above, pp. 45–46). The prominent examples are Eudicus' intervention in the *Hippias Minor,* Socrates' acknowledgment of Anytus' presence in the *Meno*, Chaerephon's interventions in the *Gorgias*, and the landscape descriptions in the *Phaedrus* (on the latter see below, pp. 126–27). On the other hand, the *Ion*, the *Laches*, the *Cratylus*, and the *Philebus* are much less receptive to this kind of test. Moreover, such late dialogues as the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias* reduce the narrator's text to the opening part of the dialogue and proceed on their own, as it were. So the results are mixed, but it is obvious by now that, although the narrator's text is indeed frequently placed at strategic positions in the dialogue, the practice is not universally applied. Accordingly, the location of the narrator's text cannot be regarded as a signal of narratorial authority. Implications of this conclusion for determining the position of narrator in Plato's dialogues will be discussed in Chapter 6.

72 Cf. Schmid 2008: 74, on implicit narrator in the third-person narrative: "Der implizit dargestellte Erzähler ist ein Konstrukt, das aus den Symptomen des Erzähltextes gebildet wird. Strenggenommen, ist er nicht anders als der Träger der indizierter Eigenschaften."

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CHAPTER 4

# The Explicit and the Implicit Narrator Combined: Mixed Dialogues

## 1 Introducing the Mixed Dialogues

The so-called mixed dialogues differ from the two other categories in that here Plato makes the primary narrative act manifest by dramatizing it. At the beginning of each dialogue of this group the prospective narrator and narratee are represented as engaged in what looks like an extradiegetic "real-life" encounter. As far as we can judge, this specific subgenre of Socratic dialogue was Plato's own invention, and Plato was the only Socratic writer who practiced it.

Generally speaking, presenting the frame story as standing for "the real" is, as Peter Brooks has pointed out, a characteristic feature of frame narratives:

> That is, in the frame-tale structure, the outer frame comes to represent "the real" and movement from inner to outer tales suggests the movement of reference, making real.[1]

It goes without saying that the "reality" introduced by the frame story is itself fictional.

Plato's frame stories are peculiar in that they assume dramatic rather than narrated form. This is probably why their openings closely resemble the openings of short dramatic dialogues.

- In the dramatic frame of the *Protagoras*, an unnamed acquaintance asks Socrates to tell him and his friends about his recent meeting with Protagoras.
- In the dramatic frame of the *Euthydemus*, Crito asks Socrates to tell him about his recent meeting with Euthydemus and Dionysodorus.
- In the dramatic frame of the *Phaedo*, Echecrates asks Phaedo to tell him about Socrates' final hours.
- In the dramatic frame of the *Symposium*, Socrates' associate Apollodorus complies with the unnamed acquaintance's request to tell him about the famous party in Agathon's house.

1 Brooks 1992: 220. Cf. also Brooks 1992: 225–26, 235.

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– In the dramatic frame of the *Theaetetus*, Terpsion asks Socrates' friend Euclides to tell him about a conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus years earlier.

Their dramatic form notwithstanding, the openings of the mixed dialogues are not to be approached as non-narrative. As we have seen, Plato leaves us no such classificatory option. Insofar indeed as he classifies any dramatic composition as "diegesis through mimesis" (Chapter 1), dramatic frames may not be treated differently from his other dramatic texts. Namely, the figure of implicit narrator should be considered here as well.

Let us return for a moment to the sequence of narrative levels observed in the *Parmenides*, a multi-level narrated dialogue discussed in Chapter 2. The narrative act of Pythodorus, an eyewitness to the conversation that is the dialogue's subject, is intradiegetic by virtue of its being mediated by the narrative act of his narratee Antiphon, and the narrative act of Antiphon is in turn intradiegetic by virtue of its being mediated by the narrative act of his narratee Cephalus. The latter is he who communicates the story to the extradiegetic narratee, which renders his narrative act extradiegetic (above, p. 39). Thus three intradiegetic levels are found in the *Parmenides*: Cephalus' narrative act produces the first intradiegetic level, Antiphon's produces the second, and Pythodorus' produces the third. The transition from one level to another is accompanied by a shift of narrative voice, so that one level's narrator becomes the next level's narratee.

Let us now assume that the dialogue's first intradiegetic level, Cephalus encounter with Glaucon and Adeimantus, is cast in direct rather than reported speech. This would make the first intradiegetic level appear extradiegetic, ostensibly leaving us only with the narratives of Antiphon and Pythodorus, that is, with a two-level narrative structure. This is precisely what happens in the mixed dialogues.

The point can be further illustrated by comparing the narrated *Parmenides* with the mixed *Symposium*. In the dramatic frame of the latter, Apollodorus agrees to tell an unnamed friend what he heard from Aristodemus about Agathon's dinner party; this dramatic encounter is followed by Apollodorus' rehearsal of Aristodemus' narrative. The bottom-level narrator of the *Symposium*, Aristodemus, is found in the same position as Pythodorus, the bottom-level narrator of the *Parmenides*. Aristodemus' narratee Apollodorus, who narrates the story to an unnamed friend, is found in the same position as Pythodorus' narratee Antiphon, who narrates the story to Cephalus and his companions. Finally, Apollodorus' anonymous narratee is found in the same position as Antiphon's narratee Cephalus, the primary narrator of the *Parmenides*. Yet, the moment the narrative frame becomes a dramatic one, its narrator becomes implicit:

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| | the *Parmenides* | the *Symposium* |
|---|---|---|
| 1st level | Cephalus | [Apollodorus' friend] |
| 2nd level | Antiphon | Apollodorus |
| 3rd level | Pythodorus | Aristodemus |

By dramatizing what is effectively a frame narrative, Plato – just as in the programmatic case of the *Theaetetus* discussed in Chapter 1 – economizes on the narrative level that the introduction of such a full-scale frame narrative would involve. That is, just as the embedded story of the *Theaetetus* is disguised as if belonging to the first intradiegetic level (above, pp. 5–8), so too the dramatic frame of this and the other mixed dialogues is disguised as if belonging to the extradiegetic level, being in fact fully enclosed within the intradiegetic domain: it is, as simply as possible, pseudo-extradiegetic.[2] This becomes immediately obvious if we take into account that the narratees of the dramatic frames are invariably personalized as characters. To repeat Genette's assessment of such fictional narratees,

> We, the readers, cannot identify ourselves with those fictive narratees anymore than those intradiegetic narrators can address themselves to us, or even assume our existence.[3]

But if they have no extradiegetic narrator, by whose agency will the dramatic frames reach their implied readers? This, if anything, is why the figure of implicit narrator should be introduced here as well.

Beyond the dramatic frame, the mixed dialogues for the most part proceed as regular narrated dialogues. Their openings follow the same two-stage pattern, successively introducing (I) the initial spatiotemporal situation and cast of characters and (II) the eventual spatiotemporal situation and cast of characters (above, pp. 27–28).

– In the framed narrative of the *Protagoras*, Socrates starts narrating how (I) the young Hippocrates came to his house early in the morning and how (II)

2 See also below, p. 101. In his recent discussion of the *Euthydemus* and *Protagoras*, Collins 2015: 45–169, overlooks this point, referring to the dramatic frame in both dialogues as extradiegetic. The same is true of Halperin 1992: 98, who draws no distinction between the personalized narratee of the *Symposium* and the dialogue's implied reader.

3 Genette 1980: 260; cf. above, p. 18.

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they arrived in the house of Callias, where they found Protagoras and other sophists; this is followed by Socrates' report of the conversation that developed as a result of the encounter.
- In the framed narrative of the *Euthydemus*, Socrates narrates how (I) he was sitting alone in the Lyceum dressing room and how (II) Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, and other interlocutors arrived and joined him; this is followed by Socrates' report of the conversation that developed as a result of the encounter.
- In the framed narrative of the *Phaedo*, Phaedo narrates how (I) he and other visitors assembled in the Athenian prison, and how (II) Socrates was eventually left in the company of his close friends; this is followed by Phaedo's report of Socrates' last conversation and his death.
- In the framed narrative of the *Symposium*, Apollodorus narrates how (I) Aristodemus met Socrates who was on his way to Agathon's house, and how, (II) on arriving there, they joined the party, where they met more people; this is followed by Aristodemus' report of a series of speeches delivered on the occasion.
- In the framed pseudo-diegetic narrative of the *Theaetetus*, Euclides' slave reads his master's account of how (I) Socrates met Theodorus the geometer, and how (II) the latter introduced to him his student Theaetetus on the latter's arrival; this is followed by Socrates' report of the conversation that developed as a result of the encounter.

More often than not, the dramatic frames of Plato's mixed dialogues have no closure.[4] Only the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* end precisely where they began, namely, with the frame conversations between Socrates and Crito and between Phaedo and Echecrates, respectively. In the three other dialogues, the closure corresponds to the opening of the framed story rather than to that of the dramatic frame: Socrates and Hippocrates leave Callias' house whither they arrived at the beginning of the framed story (the *Protagoras*); Socrates and Aristodemus leave the house of Agathon whither they arrived at the beginning of the framed story (the *Symposium*); Socrates says goodbye to Theodorus and Theaetetus whom he met at the beginning of the framed story and departs for the Porch of King Archon (the *Theaetetus*).

4 Such incomplete framing has numerous counterparts in world literature. Wolf (2006: 187–88) suggests that the concluding framing is frequently omitted in order to avoid anticlimactic effects; he adduces Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* as an example. Cf. also Brooks' (1992, 256–57 and 351 n. 8) discussion of the absence of a satisfactory closure in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

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While the similarity between the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues and the thoroughly narrated dialogues is undeniable, it would be incorrect to approach the mixed dialogues as a more or less mechanical combination of narrated dialogue and dramatic frame.[5] In every dialogue of this group, the presence of the dramatic frame is felt all along. In the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* the frame intrudes into the main narrative to produce metalepsis; in the *Symposium* the frame narrator's voice is heard throughout the narrated story; and even in the relatively straightforward narrative of the *Protagoras* the boundaries between the frame story and the narrative it encloses are significantly transgressed (more below).[6] This unambiguously demonstrates that the mixed dialogues were conceived and executed as multi-level narratives.

## 2 The *Protagoras*

An unidentified acquaintance meets Socrates in the street. Learning that Socrates has just left a meeting at which Protagoras and other illustrious sophists were present, he is eager to know more about the encounter; Socrates complies with the request and begins his account of the conversation that took place in Callias' house.

### 2.1 *Frame Narrator (Implicit): An Unnamed Athenian*

The dramatic frame[7] of the *Protagoras* is unusually short (approximately one Stephanus page), so that the regular signals of narratorial authority are quite few here. Still, it is quite obvious that the dramatic frame of the *Protagoras* is focalized through Socrates' prospective narratee.

The dialogue begins: "Where do you come from, Socrates? And yet I need hardly ask the question, for I know that you have been in chase of the beautiful Alcibiades." Socrates admits that he indeed arrives from a meeting at which Alcibiades was present, and that the latter even helped him there, speaking in his defense. "But shall I tell you a strange thing? I paid no attention to him, and

5 So Thesleff 1982: 207: "Moreover, pieces of dramatic dialogue seem in many cases to have been secondarily attached to bodies of reported dialogue or speeches … Most instances of dramatic 'frame' dialogues … can be explained as such secondary additions."

6 The *Theaetetus* stands apart, in that in this dialogue the dramatic form replaces the narrative at each successive level.

7 Plato's narrated dialogues have no unnamed narrators. But Xenophon, for one, never names his first-person narrators, who presumably belong with Socrates' interlocutors or silent bystanders. On Xenophon's anonymous narrators see Gray 2004: 377–80, Danzig 2017: 132 n. 1; on frame narrators see Chapter 1.

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several times I quite forgot that he was present." The interlocutor is appalled. Is it possible that Socrates has met in the city of Athens someone more beautiful than the son of Cleinias? Socrates replies that he has indeed met someone much more beautiful than Alcibiades, for the wiser is always the more beautiful, and Protagoras, whom he has just met, is the wisest of all living men. "What! Is Protagoras in Athens?" the other man exclaims, and the "zooming-in" is complete (309a1–d3). Through the perception of the unnamed interlocutor we come to learn the identity of the man whom Socrates has recently met.

Later on, it is again the unnamed interlocutor who sets the scene for Socrates' narration: "Why shouldn't you sit down here and tell us what passed? My slave will give up his place to you" (310a2–4).[8] Socrates' prospective narratee thus acts in the *Protagoras'* dramatic frame as the one who introduces the setting of the frame and of the following narration – so much so that he and the narrative situation in which he is involved will re-emerge several times in the course of the framed story (see below, on metalepsis). These signals of narratorial authority substantiate the assumption, made in Section 1, that by virtue of his position as Socrates' narratee the unnamed interlocutor should be identified as the implicit extradiegetic narrator of the dramatic frame (the first intradiegetic level) and, accordingly, of the dialogue as a whole.

### 2.2 *Narrator-Hero (Explicit): Socrates*

In the narrated part of the *Protagoras* (the second intradiegetic level), Socrates the narrator little by little introduces us to the story's setting and characters. Every detail is vividly vizualized:

> When we entered, we found Protagoras taking a walk in the covered court; and next to him, on one side, were walking Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and Paralus, the son of Pericles … and Charmides, the son of Glaucon.[9] On the other side of him were Xanthippus, the other son of Pericles, Philippides, the son of Philomelus; also Antimoerus of Mende … A train of listeners followed him … Nothing delighted me more than the precision of their movements: they never got into his way at all; but when he and those who were with him turned back, then the band of listeners parted regularly on either side; he was always in front, and they wheeled round and took their places behind him in perfect order. (314e3–315b8)

8 The use of the pronomen "us" indicates that, just like Apollodorus' unnamed interlocutor in the *Symposium* (below), the unnamed interlocutor of the *Protagoras* represents a larger audience. Cf. Thesleff 1967: 40.

9 On Callias and Charmides see nn. 8 and 13 to Chapter 2.

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"If the *Protagoras* conveyed no philosophical lesson," W.K.C. Guthrie wrote, "it would remain a superb work of literature. It must be read, not just read about."[10] A brilliant travesty of Homer's account of Odysseus' visit to the Underworld follows, introducing two more celebrities, the sophists Hippias and Prodicus, each surrounded by his own circle of admirers (315b9–316a2). The introduction concludes with the entrance of Alcibiades and Critias, which emphatically brings back the dialogue's dramatic frame:

> No sooner had we entered than there followed us Alcibiades the beautiful, *as you say, and I agree with you*; and Critias the son of Callaeschrus. On entering we stopped a little, in order to look about us, and then walked up to Protagoras, and I said: "Protagoras, my friend Hippocrates and I have come to see you."[11]

In the body of the dialogue, Socrates the narrator describes Hippocrates' laughter and blushes (310d, 312a), the laughter and cheers of Protagoras' supporters (334c, 339d-e), the audience's approval (320c, 337c, 338b, 340d), Protagoras' pretentiousness, anger, dissatisfaction, and embarassment (333d, 333e, 335ab, 338e, 348c), Prodicus' laughter (358b), as well as his own emotional responses (see, e.g., 339d-e, quoted below).[12] As with the other first-person narrators, we depend entirely on Socrates for the amount of information we are exposed to – see, for example, 336d7: "When Alcibiades had done speaking, someone – Critias, I believe – went on to say …" As we have seen, all these are signals of narratorial authority, applied in the narrated and the dramatic dialogues alike.

### 2.3 *Metalepsis*

On three occasions, the dramatic frame intrudes into the narrated world to produce frame-breaking, or metalepsis. In the passage just cited, Socrates the narrator directly addresses his narratee, quoting the remark by the latter about Alcibiades made at a different narrative level (above, p. 80). Later on, when describing his distress at the moment he felt defeated by Protagoras' eloquence, Socrates addresses the narratee again. He does so in a way that closely resembles what we observed in the *Charmides* (above, p. 34):

> Many of the audience cheered and applauded this. And I felt at first giddy and faint, as if I had received a blow from the hand of an expert boxer,

10 Guthrie 1975: 215.

11 *Prt.* 316a3–b2; my emphasis. On frame-breaking that the passage involves see the next section; on Critias see above, n. 13 to Chapter 2.

12 Cf. Bowery 2007: 90.

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> when I heard his words and the sound of the cheering. *To tell you the truth*, I wanted to get time to think what the meaning of the poet really is. So I turned to Prodicus …[13]

The third case is probably the subtlest of the three. It occurs, again, at one of the structural breaks:

> Thus I spoke and was rising from my seat, when Callias seized me by the right hand, and in his left hand caught hold *of this old cloak of mine*. He said: "We cannot let you go, Socrates, for if you depart our discussion (*hoi dialogoi*) will not be the same."[14]

Socrates' emphatic pointing at his cloak not only brings us back to the dramatic frame, that is, to the narrative level on which the fictional act of narration takes place, but also vividly materializes the interpenetration of narrative levels produced thereby. For a moment, the frame and the framed interlock, but narrative flow resumes almost immediately. As we have seen, such quick re-establishment of the boundaries between the narrative levels is a distinctive characteristic of rhetorical metalepsis.[15] Only in the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* do the dramatic frame and the framed narrative interpenetrate so deeply that the plot level as a whole becomes affected (below).

### 2.4 *Juxtaposition of the Frame and the Narrative*

A considerable gap separates the messages delivered in the dramatic frame from those in the body of the *Protagoras*. In the latter, the evaluation of Protagoras is mixed. On the one hand the dialogue gives notable credit to some of Protagoras' arguments and the man himself.[16] This especially concerns the argument of the teachability of virtue – so much so that the dialogue concludes with Socrates teasingly admitting that the discussion has made him change his initial position on the issue. Furthermore, he also admits that Protagoras' myth of Prometheus, introduced to support this argument, has been of great value to him:

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13 *Prt.* 339d10–e5; my emphasis.

14 *Prt.* 335c7–d3; my emphasis.

15 Above, p. 23. On the distinction between rhetorical and ontological metalepsis see also below, p. 86.

16 See, e.g., Gagarin 1969: 163: "we must conclude, it seems to me, that Plato is trying to present a sympathetic portrait of Protagoras in this dialogue, and that he shows great respect, not only for the man, but also for his thought." Cf. Guthrie 1975: 233: "Protagoras was an opponent, but a worthy one, and to devote a dialogue to showing the strength rather than the weakness of the adversary was not wasted labour."

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> I liked Prometheus in the myth better than Epimetheus: so I make use of him and spend my time on all these matters as a means for taking forethought (*promēthoumenos*) for my whole life. (361d2–5)[17]

Significantly, throughout the dialogue Plato dodges such aspects of Protagoras' doctrine that Socrates would find wholly unacceptable – first and foremost, the "man-as-measure" proposition. Protagoras' relativism will be given its due in the *Theaetetus*, not in the dialogue that bears the great sophist's name.

On the other hand, Socrates the character leaves no room for doubt as to his unambiguously negative attitude to the kind of education that the sophists, Protagoras included, claim to provide. In the opening of the framed part of the dialogue, just before taking the young Hippocrates to the meeting with Protagoras, whose student the youth aspires to become, Socrates converses with him at length about the dangers of sophistic education (311a-314c). No less significant is that, as Michael Erler pointed out recently,[18] at the end of the dialogue Socrates and Hippocrates depart together (362a4 "Having said and heard that much, we went our way"), leaving no room for doubt as to the choice that Socrates' young friend eventually made.

As distinct from this, the perspective adopted in the dramatic frame is unambiguously positive. Socrates' praise of Protagoras' wisdom, expressed in terms of the *Symposium* scale of beauty,[19] strongly suggests that, whatever happens in the body of the dialogue, Plato meant to focus the readers' attention on the elements in Protagoras' doctrine (presumably, the Prometheus myth) that he saw as worthy of appreciation. In other words, the perspective on Protagoras offered in the dramatic frame does not fully overlap the one given in the narrated part of the dialogue; the reader is invited to form his or her own opinion of the famous sophist. As we shall see immediately, a similar gap between the perspectives adopted in the dramatic frame and in the body of the dialogue is also characteristic of the *Euthydemus*.

## 3 The *Euthydemus*

Crito questions Socrates as to the identity of the stranger with whom he saw him converse at the Lyceum the day before, and Socrates tells him of his

17 Tr. W.K.C. Guthrie, slightly modified. On Plato's treatment of the Prometheus myth in the *Protagoras* see Morgan 2000: 134–54.

18 Erler, forthcoming.

19 Quoted above, p. 81. On the role of the theme of love in the dialogue's dramatic frame see Friedländer 1964: 5–6.

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meeting with the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, two famous practitioners of the art of eristics.

### 3.1 *Frame Narrator (Implicit): Crito*

Let us look closer at the way the dialogue begins.

> "Who was the person, Socrates, with whom you were speaking yesterday at the Lycaeum? There was such a crowd around you that I could not get within hearing, but I caught a sight of him over their heads, and I made out, as I thought, that he was a stranger with whom you were talking: who was he?" "There were two, Crito, which of them do you mean?" "The one whom I mean was seated second from you on the right-hand side. In the middle was Cleinias the young son of Axiochus, who has wonderfully grown … the other is thin and looks younger than he is." "He whom you mean, Crito, is Euthydemus; and on my left hand there was his brother Dionysodorus, who also took part in the conversation." (271a1–b8)

We perceive the setting of the dialogue, the participants' physical appearance and their respective positions through Crito's eyes. We also experience the gradual unveiling of the participants' identities through Crito's mediation – first by means of an incomplete picture of the yesterday's gathering he has formed in his mind, and then by his completing it by eliciting additional information from Socrates.[20] As we have seen, in both the narrated and the dramatic dialogues Plato repeatedly employs such markers of focalization to signal the source of narratorial authority. This fully agrees with our preliminary assumption that the narratees of the mixed dialogues should be regarded as implicit narrators of the dialogues' dramatic frames (the first intradiegetic level).

### 3.2 *Narrator-Hero (Explicit): Socrates*

Beyond the dramatic frame, however, Socrates' narratorial authority is absolute (the second intradiegetic level). First he describes himself sitting alone in the Lyceum dressing room; this is followed by a description of Euthydemus, Dionysodorus and their followers coming in and starting to walk about in the covered court; and finally, he registers the arrival of the beautiful Cleinias accompanied

20 See also *Euthyd.* 271c2–4, and above, p. 21. Cf. Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 2014: 126: "So the reader, with him [Crito], first visualizes the scene as an *image*, before the actual discussion (i.e. what we would *hear*) is reported. The reference to the crowd surrounding the interlocutors adds the chorus to the dramatis personae, and the stage is set" (original emphasis). Cf. also Collins 2015: 72–74.

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by Ctesippus and other admirers (272e1–273b1).[21] Everything happening in the story – Euthydemus' and Dionysodorus' laughter (273d); Cleinias' blushing (275d); the cheers and roaring laughter of Euthydemus' followers (276b, 276d, 303b); the audience's silence and amazement (276d); Ctesippus' anger, lack of restraint, and silence (283e, 285a, 288b; 286b, 294d); Euthydemus' anger and Dionysodorus' blushing (295d, 297a); Ctesippus' and Cleinias' laughter (298e, 300d) – is communicated to us through Socrates' perception.

### 3.3 *Metalepsis*

The action of the *Euthydemus* proceeds simultaneously on two narrative levels. Socrates the narrator never loses sight of his narratee, repeatedly addressing Crito throughout the dialogue.[22] The result is a unique mixture of dramatic and narrated form,[23] which goes far beyond an occasional apostrophe we encountered in the *Charmides* and the *Protagoras*. Insofar indeed as throughout the *Euthydemus* metalepsis is operated by means of the second-person pronoun, the dialogue comes close to what contemporary literary theory identifies as the second-person narrative. The frame and the framed intermingle, exhibiting what Marie-Laure Ryan calls "metaleptic contamination," a distinctive feature of ontological metalepsis.[24]

A more narrowly focused case of frame-breaking occurs at *Euthydemus* 290e. Socrates' young interlocutor Cleinias arrives at the conclusion that just as geometricians, astronomers and mathematicians, having made their discoveries, hand them over to the dialecticians, so too generalship cannot be considered the supreme art because generals hand over the fruits of their victories to

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21 Cleinias was a relative of Alcibiades; he also appears in the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* and in the *Symposium* of Xenophon. See further Nails 2002: 100–101. On Ctesippus see n. 12 to Chapter 2.

22 *Euthyd.* 275c5–6 "What followed, Crito, how can I rightly narrate?"; 283a1–2 "Thus I spoke, Crito, and was all attention to what was coming"; 291d5–6 "You shall judge, Crito, if you are willing to hear what followed"; 291e2 "And would not you, Crito, say the same?"; 292d5–6 "Shall we say, Crito, that that is the knowledge by which we are to make other men good?"; 292e8–293a1 "Thereupon, Crito, seeing that I found myself in such perplexity, I lifted up my voice"; 294d7–8 "At last, Crito, I too was carried away by my incredulity"; 303a4–5 "At this I was quite struck dumb, Crito, and lay prostrate"; 303b1–2 "Then, my dear Crito, there was universal applause of the speakers and their words"; 304b6–7 "Such was the discussion, Crito, and after a few more words had passed between us we went away."

23 Cf. Guthrie 1975: 267: "a skilful blending of direct and reported forms." See also Morgan 2004: 368; Collins 2015: 58.

24 Ryan 2006: 207: "Whereas rhetorical metalepsis maintains the levels of the stack distinct from each other, ontological metalepsis opens a passage between levels that results in their interpenetration, or mutual contamination." On the metaleptic character of the second-person narrative see McHale 1987: 222–27; cf. Fludernik 2003: 385–86, 393–94.

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the statesmen. The idea that mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, harmonics) is subordinated to dialectic is central to the program of higher education of the Guardians as outlined in Book 7 of the *Republic*.[25] So it is hardly mere chance that at this very moment Crito the narratee interferes by asking: "*And do you mean, Socrates, that the youngster said all this?*" (290e1–2; my emphasis). A brief exchange follows, in which Socrates ironically suggests that it was probably "some superior entity (*tis tōn kreittonōn*)" who uttered these words (291a4). The startling reference to the superiority of dialectic over mathematics has been effectively highlighted. As we shall see immediately, a similar strategy of foregrounding by means of metalepsis is also characteristic of the *Phaedo*.

### 3.4 *Juxtaposition of the Frame and the Narrative*

Everything indicates that the *Euthydemus* constant switching back and forth between the story and the dramatic frame was meant to create a distance between what Socrates asserts in this dialogue and what Plato's actual position is.[26] The Socrates of the *Euthydemus* frequently expresses unalloyed admiration for the virtuoso performance of the champions of eristics Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. To alert the reader that this admiration should not be taken at face value, Plato takes a series of steps. First, he introduces an additional character, Ctesippus the admirer of Cleinias, who supplies common-sense responses, including laughter, to the brothers' hair-splitting arguments. Secondly he makes Crito echo these responses in the dramatic frame,[27] primarily in his favorable report of the opinion of an unnamed critic of eristics (most probably Isocrates[28]) adduced at the end of the dialogue (304d-305a). Finally and most importantly Plato lets Socrates express a nuanced opinion in the words that supply the dialogue's closure and are clearly addressed not to Crito alone:

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25 *Resp*. 521d-541b. Cf. Friedländer 1964: 190, on the *Euthydemus* passage: "We sight the system of sciences developed in the *Republic*." Similarly Kahn 1996: 321: "The most advanced reference to dialectic in Group I [sc. the dialogues preceding the *Republic*]." On the central position of this section within the *Euthydemus* see Thesleff 1967: 40, 111; cf. Chance 1992: 126.

26 Cf. Kahn 1996: 325: "Plato makes use of the frame dialogue between Socrates and Crito, both in the middle and at the end of the narrated dialogue, like the parabasis in an Aristophanic comedy, to speak as it were directly to the readers." Cf. also Collins 2015: 67: "the running commentary which the framing encounter provides." On the difference between the parabasis and the form of metalepsis used by Plato see below, Chapter 5.

27 Cf. Ferrari 2010: 18: "By fully characterizing the narratee, Plato makes the situation clear"; on Crito's attitude see also Collins 2015: 62.

28 See the discussion in Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 2014: 143–51.

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> Do you then be reasonable, Crito, and do not mind whether the teachers of philosophy are good or bad, but examine philosophy itself well and carefully and, if it appears to you as unworthy, seek to turn away everyone from it, and not your sons only; but if it appears as what I believe it is, then cheer up and follow and serve it, you and yours, as the saying is. (307b6–c4)

Despite Socrates' statements in the body of the dialogue, the constant interplay between the frame and the framed results in that the perspective adopted in the *Euthydemus* is unmistakably multifocal: not only Crito but also the readers are invited to form an independent opinion by choosing between the options the dialogue displays.

## 4 The *Phaedo*

The dramatic frame[29] of the dialogue takes us to Phlius in the northwestern Peloponnese. Socrates has been dead for some time now, but before Phaedo's arrival[30] there has been very little traffic between Athens and Phlius. Echecrates[31] and other Pythagoreans of Phlius have already been informed of the particulars of Socrates' trial (58a1–3); however, besides the bare fact that Socrates took poison in prison, they are ignorant of the circumstances of his death.

### 4.1 *Frame Narrator (Implicit): Echecrates*

Like the other mixed dialogues, the *Phaedo* has two narrators, one implicit in the dramatic frame, the other explicit in the body of the dialogue. By definition, Phaedo's narratee Echecrates should occupy the position of the implicit narrator of the dramatic frame (the first intradiegetic level, see above, pp. 77–78). And indeed, just like the frame narrators of the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus*, Echecrates is the one who focalizes the information supplied by Phaedo by becoming gradually exposed to it. Again, as in the two other dialogues, this gradual focalization takes the form of a series of questions.

The dialogue opens with a question by Echecrates: "Where you yourself, Phaedo, in the prison with Socrates on the day when he drank the poison?" (57a1–2). Echecrates is eager to learn what Socrates said before his death,

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29 The plot structure of the dialogue is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

30 Phaedo of Elis, author of Socratic dialogues, was a student of Socrates; he founded a school of philosophy in his native Elis. See further Sedley 1995: 8–9; Kahn 1996: 9–12; Nails 2002: 231.

31 Echecrates of Phlius was a prominent Pythagorean. See further Sedley 1995: 10–11; Nails 2002: 138.

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and how he died ((57a5–6). He also wonders why the execution was delayed (58a3–5), and Phaedo provides him and the readers with a detailed account of the Athenian custom of sending a sacred embassy to Delos, and how it held up the execution (58a6–c5). Echecrates again asks about the manner of Socrates' death, about what was said and done on the occasion and who among Socrates' followers was present (58c6–9). Phaedo is delighted to supply the required information. "You will have listeners who are of the same mind with you," Echecrates says before Phaedo starts his narration, "and I hope that you will be as exact as you can" (58d7–9). The frame story is over, and the main narrative begins.

### 4.2 *Narrator-Observer* (*Explicit*)*: Phaedo*

The main narrator of the *Phaedo* (the second intradiegetic level) is positioned differently from the narrators of the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus*. Phaedo is not the dialogue's leading character nor is he one of the main interlocutors. Even though on one memorable occasion he is pushed to the foreground (more below), Phaedo's principal position is that of observer and witness.

Not that Phaedo's role of narrator-observer affects his narratorial authority: throughout the dialogue, we are exposed only to what Phaedo perceives, remembers, or chooses to tell us.[32] This concerns the dialogue's setting,[33] the respective positions of those present,[34] Socrates' body language,[35] as well as the near clinical description of Socrates' agony and death.[36] When the audience's emotional state is beyond the limits of the narrator's perception, this is acknowledged and accounted for by means of metalepsis: "when we had heard them [Simmias and Cebes] state their objections, we all felt very much

32 Cf. *Phd.* 102a10–b3 "As far as I can see, after all this had been accepted … he said …" or 103a4–5 "Hereupon one of the company, though I do not exactly remember which of them, said …"

33 *Phd.* 59e8–60a2 "On entering we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xantippe, *whom you know*, sitting by him, and holding a child in her arms" (my emphasis; see further below, on metalepsis in the *Phaedo*).

34 *Phd.* 89a9–b2 "I was close to him [Socrates] on his right hand, seated on a sort of stool, and he on a couch which was a good deal higher."

35 *Phd.* 60b1–3 "Socrates, sitting up on the couch, bent and rubbed his leg saying …"; 86d 5 "Socrates looked fixedly (διαβλέψας) at us as his manner was"; 103a11 "Socrates inclined (παραβαλών) his head to the speaker and listened"; 117b5–6 "looking at the man from under the brows (ὑποβλέψας) like a bull, as his manner was."

36 *Phd.* 117e4–118a14. Cf. Murley 1955: 286: "The familiar details of the closing scene of the *Phaedo* (117E) become impressive from their stark simplicity fraught with tragic meaning, and would seem to have determined the treatment of Fantine's death in *Les Miserables* as Jean Valjean follows its progress."

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depressed, *as we told one another later*." Plato's narrator is never configured as omniscient.[37]

The atmosphere of the dialogue – sombre and relaxed at one and the same time, wholly depends on Phaedo's careful selection of details. No cheers and roaring laughter here, only gentle laughing and smiling – by Socrates (84d8, 86d6, 115c5), by Cebes (62a8, 77e3, 101b3), by Simmias, who also comments: "Though I am not in a laughing mood today, Socrates, you have made me laugh" (64a10–b1). Understandably enough, weeping and lament loom large – by Xantippe (60a1–b1), by the jailor (116d2), by Crito, by Phaedo himself, by Apollodorus (the frame narrator of the *Symposium*), and by everyone present except Socrates himself (cf. 59a8–9 "we were laughing and weeping by turns" and 117c5–d6). On both the artistic and personal level (see especially Socrates' playing with Phaedo's hair at 89ab), the dialogue is essentially Phaedo's story, and one may wonder whether Plato's account of Socrates' last day would have looked different had he chosen a different narrator – for example, Xenophon's source Hermogenes.[38]

### 4.3 *Metalepsis*

Like the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo* is a metaleptic dialogue whose action proceeds simultaneously on two narrative levels. In the framed narrative delivered by Phaedo, Socrates' opening arguments for the immortality of the soul – the argument from alternation, the argument from recollection, the argument from affinity – are followed by a structural break, which introduces the objections raised by Simmias and Cebes[39] and serves as a transition to the culminating argument (below, pp. 144–45). The audience's reaction to the objections is worth being quoted in full:

> Well, when we had heard them state their objections, we all felt very much depressed, *as we told one another later*. We had been quite convinced by the earlier part of the discussion, and now we felt that they had upset our convictions and destroyed our confidence not only in what had

37 *Phd.* 88c1–2 πάντες οὖν ἀκούσαντες εἰπόντων αὐτῶν ἀηδῶς διετέθημεν, ὡς ὕστερον ἐλέγομεν ἀλλήλους; tr. H. Tredennick (quoted in full below). On the lack of omniscience in Plato's narrators see also above, n. 16 to Chapter 2; on metalepsis in the *Phaedo* see the next section.

38 Plato was not among those present at Socrates' death (*Phd.* 59b10), and it is not out of the question that it was indeed Phaedo who was his source. On Hermogenes (one of the interlocutors in the *Cratylus*) see above, n. 26 to Chapter 3.

39 Pythagoreans from Thebes, friends of Socrates; also mentioned in the *Crito* (45b). See further Sedley 1995; Nails 2002: 82–83, 260–61.

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> been said already, but also in anything that was to follow later. (88c1–7; my emphasis)

Suddenly, this reaction is echoed on the upper level by Phaedo's narratee. Echecrates interrupts Phaedo's narrative, expressing the same sentiments as he audience in the narrated story:

> *ECHECRATES: There I feel with you and the others, by heaven I do, Phaedo, and when I was listening to you I was asking myself the same question: What argument can I ever trust again? For what could be more convincing than the argument of Socrates, which has now fallen into discredit?*[40]

This is followed by the memorable episode of Socrates' playing with Phaedo's hair (89bc). For a while, Phaedo replaces Simmias and Cebes as Socrates' interlocutor, and Socrates' diatribe against misologists, "haters of *logoi*," is addressed to him (89d-91c; see also below, p. 145). Socrates' response to the objections comes next; it prepares the ground for the final argument for the immortality of the soul and introduces the Theory of Forms (91c-101e). Now Simmias and Cebes are fully satisfied with Socrates' argument: "'What you say is most true,' said Simmias and Cebes, both speaking at once" (102a2). In another metaleptic leap, Echecrates echoes them again from the upper narrative level:

> *ECHECRATES: Yes, Phaedo; and I do not wonder at their assenting. Anyone who has the least sense will acknowledge the wonderful clearness of Socrates' reasoning. PHAEDO: Certainly, Echecrates; and such was the feeling of the whole company at the time. ECHECRATES: Yes, and equally of ourselves, who were absent, and are now listening. But what followed?* (102a3–9).

The double frame-breaking that encloses the argument of the Theory of Forms not only highlights its central position in the *Phaedo*[41] but also transfers the dialogue into the realm of actuality, providing it with a broader temporal perspective than that supplied by its immediate context. This is neatly

40 *Phd.* 88c8–d3. Cf. Taylor 1960: 194: "The purpose of all this by-play is to call attention to the critical importance of the two problems which have just been raised. We are, in fact, at the turning-point of the discussion." Cf. also Thesleff 1967: 40–41.

41 On a similar function of metalepsis in the *Euthydemus* see above, pp. 86–87.

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conveyed by Echecrates' words "*and equally of ourselves, who were absent, and are now listening*," encompassing all readers and listeners of the *Phaedo*.[42]

Echecrates' interventions thus affect the entire dialogue, functioning as an integral element of its plot (see above, p. 83, on ontological metalepsis). It seems significant in this connection that the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* are the only dialogues in which metaleptic transgression is initiated not by the narrator, as in the other dialogues and elsewhere in the *Phaedo* (see 60a2, 88c2, 117b3), but by the narratee. This results in the two dialogues functioning not only as stories delivered by Socrates and Phaedo respectively, but also as dramas of the reception of these stories by the audience.[43]

### 4.4 *Juxtaposition of the Frame and the Narrative*

While in the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus* the juxtaposition of the frame and the framed was used to introduce several contrasting perspectives, in the *Phaedo* it serves to multiply and enhance the perspective adopted in the main story by deepening its temporal dimension. It is hardly by mere chance that the chronological distance between Socrates' death and Phaedo's delivery of his story is not specified. Admittedly, the time that has passed could not have been very long, but Plato's vagueness creates the impression of a long interval suitable for a great historical event worthy of perpetual commemoration. This is made especially clear from Phaedo's anachronistic use of the expression "the men of those days" in the dialogue's closure:

> Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of those days (τῶν τότε) whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best (118a15–17).[44]

Such a long-term perspective rising from juxtaposition of the dramatic frame and the main narrative also characterizes the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus*.

42 *Phd*. 102a8 καὶ γὰρ ἡμῖν τοῖς ἀποῦσι, νῦν δὲ ἀκούουσιν. Cf. Morgan 2004: 367: "It is hard not to think that his [Echecrates'] reactions are a guide to reader reception and response." Cf. also Rowe 1993: 211; Hösle 2012: 174–75; Collins 2012: 165–67.

43 Cf. Brooks 1992: 236: "Framed narratives and those, such as [Albert Camus'] *La Chute*, that incorporate the listener in the discourse of the speaker incorporate most explicitly a condition of all narrative: shape and meaning are the product of the listening as of the telling."

44 The expression is also used, with a greater justification, in the dramatic frame of the *Symposium*, see *Symp*. 172b1, 173b4, and below in this chapter.

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## 5 The *Symposium*

Socrates' follower Apollodorus fulfils the request of an unnamed friend to tell him and his companions, all wealthy tradesmen, what he has heard from Aristodemus, another associate of Socrates, about the speeches in praise of love delivered years before at a dinner party in the house of the poet Agathon.

### 5.1 *Frame Narrator 1 (Implicit): Multiple Narrators*

Rather than with a dramatic exchange characteristic of the other mixed dialogues, the *Symposium* starts with a monologue by the second-level narrator, Apollodorus, addressed to his unindentified fictional narratee:

> Concerning the things about which you ask to be informed I believe that I am not ill-prepared with an answer. For the day before yesterday I was coming from my own home at Phalerum to the city, and one of my acquaintance, who had caught a sight of me from behind, calling out playfully in the distance, said: "Apollodorus, O you Phalerian man, halt!" (172a1–5)

It is not for the first time that Apollodorus tells this story.[45] Just two days earlier he had told it to Glaucon[46] when the two were on their way from Phaleron to Athens. In fact, we learn everything about the date and circumstances of Agathon's party and the man who was the source of the story from Apollodorus' retelling of his earlier conversation with Glaucon. It is Glaucon as presented in Apollodorus' report who actually focalizes the background information that was missing at the beginning of the dialogue.

Glaucon has already heard the story from another person, whose source was Phoenix son of Philip; however he did not find Phoenix's version satisfactory (172b). Together with Glaucon, we learn about when and on what occasion Agathon's party took place: not recently, as Glaucon supposed, but when both he and Apollodorus were boys, the day after Agathon won the prize with his first tragedy (173a). Apollodorus also describes the man who told him the story:

45 Critias' story of Atlantis as delivered in the *Timaeus* is presented in a similar way, see *Ti.* 20c6–d6, 26a7–b2.

46 *Symp*. 172c2. Cf. Nails 2002: 315: "The lack of any further specification of Glaucon by demotic or patronymic makes it almost certain that the reference is to Plato's brother" – that is, the same Glaucon who appears in the frame story of the *Parmenides* and the opening of *Republic* 1, and who is one of the two main interlocutors of Socrates in *Republic* 2–10; cf. n. 21 to Chapter 2.

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> The same one who told Phoenix: Aristodemus, of the deme of Cydatheneum. He was a little fellow, who never wore any shoes. He had been at Agathon's feast, and I think that among men of those days (*tōn tote*) there was no one who was a more devoted admirer of Socrates. (173b1–4)

Finally, Apollodorus informs Glaucon that he consulted Socrates about Aristodemus' account, and Socrates confirmed its reliability (173b4–6). The frame is restored to dramatic form by the interference of the man to whom Apollodorus actually tells the story, and by Apollodorus' admonition to his listeners (only now do we learn that they are wealthy tradesmen) to follow his own example by choosing the philosophical way of life (173d4–e6).

So in fact Glaucon, whose part is narrated by Apollodorus, assumes all principal functions of the dialogue's narratee, thus becoming one of the implicit narrators in the dialogue's frame (the first intradiegetic level). This unique arrangement seems to have been aimed at presenting the story of Agathon's party as reverberating in multiple versions.[47]

### 5.2 *Frame Narrator II* (*Explicit*)*: Apollodorus*

As with Antiphon, the intermediary narrator of the *Parmenides* (Chapter 2), Apollodorus' part of the frame story (the second intradiegetic level) is minimalized: from him we learn only that he heard about Agathon's party from Aristodemus and that Socrates confirmed the latter's account. Nevertheless, Apollodorus' presence is clearly discernible in the story he delivers. To begin with, the account of Agathon's party that we receive is based not only on what Aristodemus the eyewitness remembered or chose to communicate but also on what his narratee Apollodorus chose to retain and transmit further on:

> Aristodemus did not recollect all that was said, nor do I recollect all that he related to me; but I will tell you what I thought most worthy of remembrance and by the speakers worthy of remembrance as well. (178a1–5)

This is probably the reason why, as distinct from the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, and the *Phaedo*, the full list of those present is not supplied in the dialogue's opening. The ensuing story is thus presented as resulting from editing and rearranging by both the third-level and the second-level narrator.[48]

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47 On the *Symposium* as reflecting "a fundamentally oral culture of intellectual heroic tales" see Tarrant 1996: 138. Cf. also the charts of transmission adduced in Halperin 1992: 98, and Hunter 2004: 23.

48 Cf. above, pp. 37–38, Socrates the narrator of *Republic* I admitting his editing the original conversation with Thrasymachus to render it smoother.

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On one occasion, Apollodorus explicitly takes responsibility for the form in which the story is presented:

> Pausanias came to a pause (*Pausaniou de pausamenou*) – *this is the balanced way* (*isa legein*) *in which I have been taught by the wise to speak*; and Aristodemus said that the turn of Arisrophanes was next … (185c4–6; my emphasis)

Apollodorus' remark comes very close to Socrates' remark in similar circumstances in *Republic* 1 (p. 37); also as in *Republic* 1, it produces metalepsis (more below).

### 5.3 *Narrator-Observer* (*Explicit*)*: Aristodemus*

Nevertheless, as regards the main story (the third intradiegetic level), Aristodemus' narratorial authority is unquestioned. This transpires, for example, from the following remark: "And some other speeches followed which Aristodemus did not remember; the next which he repeated was that of Pausanias" (180c1–3). Whatever selection of speeches Apollodorus might have configured, he had to choose from the materials Aristodemus supplied.

No less importantly, the dialogue's concluding part clearly indicates that the narrative of the *Symposium* is envisaged as strictly circumscribed by what Aristodemus has witnessed himself:

> He [Aristodemus] was awakened towards daybreak by a crowing of cocks, and when he awoke, the others were either asleep, or had gone away; there remained only Socrates, Aristophanes, and Agathon, who were drinking out of a large goblet which they passed round, and Socrates was discoursing to them. Aristodemus was only half awake, and he did not hear the beginning of the discourse; the chief thing, however, was … (223c2–d2)

As with Pythodorus' ignorance in the *Parmenides* and Socrates' ignorance in the *Cratylus*, the *Laches*, and the *Sophist* (pp. 39, 65, 72–73), Aristodemus' ignorance as to what happened while he was asleep foregrounds his lack of omniscience and, consequently, our limited knowledge of the event described.

As in the other dialogues, the characters' appearance, movements, emotional responses, and the like are presented to us in the way the narrator perceives them. For example, this is how Aristodemus describes the audience's impression as to the nature of Alcibiades' feelings towards Socrates: "He [Aristodemus] said that, when Alcibiades had finished, there was a laugh at

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his outspokenness; for he seemed to be still in love with Socrates" (222c1–3).[49] Socrates' unusually clean and tidy appearance (174a), Aristophanes' hiccups (185ce), Alcibiades' intrusion and drunkedness (212c-214a), the laughter and cheer of those present (189b, 198a) – all these are communicated to the reader through the mediation of Aristodemus.

### 5.4 *Metalepsis*

The recurrent use of a two-tier system of reported speech, which is the signal characteristic of the *Symposium*, constantly reintroduces the frame narrator Apollodorus, thereby not allowing the reader fully to immerse into the world of the narrated story. As David Halperin put it,

> Plato constantly reminds the reader of the many narrators that intervene between the reader and the transmitted story – he emphasizes the *reported* character of the account by sprinkling throughout Apollodorus' narrative such phrases as "he said that he said" (*ephē phanai*).[50]

Aristodemus' story is thus thoroughly intermingled in Apollodorus' presentation of it. As mentioned, this kind of "metaleptic contamination," also characteristic of the narrated part of the *Parmenides*, is unique to Plato (see above, Chapter 1, p. 23).

### 5.5 *Juxtaposition of the Frame and the Narrative*

It is not hard to see that the main narrative of the *Symposium* is focalized on Socrates. It is not just that the concluding episode of the dialogue is staged as Alcibiades' unadulterated praise of Socrates. The embedded stories as delivered by Socrates and Alcibiades highlight such pivotal events in Socrates' life as his choice of the philosophical way of life, presented in the dialogue as triggered by his encounter with Diotima, and his participation in the military campaigns at Potidaea and Delium. As a result, like what we observed in the *Laches*, Socrates is presented to the reader as an accomplished philosopher and a model citizen-soldier.[51] In the *Symposium*, however, Socrates is also seen

49 Cf. *Prm*. 130a3–7, Pythodorus' assessment of the impression made by the youthful Socrates on Parmenides and Zeno (above, p. 42).

50 Halperin 1992: 97 (original emphasis). Cf. also Hunter 2004: 23: "this is a mode of presentation which never lets us forget that we are not being offered unmediated access to a 'true account' of 'what happened' in Agathon's house."

51 Characteristically, both dialogues place special emphasis on Socrates' exemplary performance during the retreat from Delium (424 BCE; also mentioned at *Ap*. 28e3); see above, p. 65, and *Symp*. 220d-221b.

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from the vantage point of the frame story, whose dramatic date is set shortly before his death.[52] By offering such a comprehensive retrospective of Socrates' life, the *Symposium* produces an in-depth portrait of its hero, unattainable in the single-level *Laches*. As we shall see immediately, a similar biography-oriented approach is also adopted in the *Theaetetus*.

## 6 The *Theaetetus*

Terpsion asks Euclides, who has just seen the dying Theaetetus being carried off home to Athens by way of their native Megara, to tell him about Socrates' encounter with Theaetetus as a youth, which Euclides heard of once from Socrates himself. Euclides agrees, and his slave reads aloud his master's written account of how Theaetetus' tutor Theodorus introduced him to Socrates and of the conversation that followed.[53]

As in the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium*, there are three narrators here – Socrates, Socrates' narratee Euclides, and Euclides' narratee Terpsion. Also as in the *Parmenides* and the *Symposium*, the two upper-level narrators are absent from the body of the dialogue: they are homodiegetic as regards the frame narrative they deliver but heterodiegetic as regards the main story. But the *Theaetetus* differs from the other multi-level dialogues in that all its narrators are implicit. The first-level narrator, Terpsion, is implicit because, as in the other mixed dialogues, the *Theaetetus*' frame story is cast in dramatic form. The third-level narrator, Socrates, is implicit because, as has been emphasized more than once, his narrative act has been deliberately suppressed. Finally, by converting Socrates' narrative into a dramatic dialogue, thereby suppressing its narrator, Socrates' narratee Euclides has transformed not only Socrates but also himself into an implicit narrator. The following comparison of the *Theaetetus* with the two other multi-level dialogues illustrates this (the implicit narrators are bracketed):

52 The dramatic frame of the dialogue is placed shortly before Agathon's death in 401 BCE (see *Symp*. 172c), that is to say, approximately two years before the death of Socrates. On "biographical criticism" in the *Symposium* see Halperin 1992: 100; see also above, pp. 43–44, on the *Parmenides*.

53 Euclides was the founder of the Megarian School of philosophy and author of Socratic dialogues; after Socrates' execution, Plato and other Athenian disciples of Socrates stayed for a while in Megara with him. Both Euclides and Terpsion were present at Socrates' death; see *Phd*. 59c2. See further Kahn 1996: 12–15; Nails 2002: 144–45, 274. On Theaetetus and Theodorus see nn. 11 and 12 to Chapter 3.

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| | the *Parmenides* | the *Symposium* | the *Theaetetus* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st level | Cephalus | [Apollodorus' friend] | [Terpsion] |
| 2nd level | Antiphon | Apollodorus | [Euclides] |
| 3rd level | Pythodorus | Aristodemus | [Socrates] |

Actually, the only thing preventing the *Theaetetus* from being treated as a fully dramatic dialogue is Euclides' account of how he suppressed the dialogue's narrator, referred to several times throughout this book (above, Chapter 1, and *passim*).

### 6.1 *Frame Narrator I* (*Implicit*)*: Terpsion*

Euclides arrives at his house in Megara where he finds Terpsion, who has been looking for him. "But I was not in the city," Euclides explains. "Where then?" "As I was going down to the harbor, I met Theaetetus – he was being carried up to Athens from the army at Corinth." "Was he alive or dead?" Euclides explains that Theaetetus has been badly wounded and, worse still, is suffering from a disease that has broken out in the army. "The dysentery, you mean?" Euclides answers in the affirmative. The interlocutors agree that Theaetetus' death will be a tremendous loss. Euclides calls the dying man "kalos kagathos," adding that he has just heard Theaetetus being highly praised for his performance on the battlefield. "But why did he go on, instead of stopping in Megara?" "He insisted on getting home," Euclides explains. "I entreated and advised him to remain, but he would not listen to me" (142a4–c3).

The opening exchange between Euclides and Terpsion is a standard example of the zooming-in procedure routinely performed by Plato's narrator (above, pp. 20–21): by asking questions, thereby gradually absorbing the information which Euclides supplies, Terpsion transmits this information to the reader (the first intradiegetic level).

### 6.2 *Frame Narrator II* (*Implicit*)*: Euclides*

Going back home from his meeting with Theaetetus, Euclides recalls that shortly before his death Socrates told him about a conversation he had recently had with Theaetetus. Socrates was full of admiration for the gifted youth and expressed the opinion that Theaetetus would most certainly become illustrious if he reached manhood (142c7–d3). "The prophecy has certainly been

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fulfilled," Terpsion says, "but what was the conversation? Can you tell me?" (142d4–5). This is where Euclides' narration begins in earnest.

Euclides took notes (*hupomnēmata*) of Socrates' account as soon as he got home.

> And later I filled them up from memory, writing them out at leisure; and whenever I went to Athens, I asked Socrates about any point which I had forgotten, and on my return I made corrections; thus I have nearly the whole conversation (*logos*) written down. (143a2–5)

As with Apollodorus in the *Symposium*, the consultation with Socrates guarantees the reliability of Euclides' account. Like Apollodorus again, Euclides also edited the original account as he saw fit.[54]

Here however the similarity with the *Symposium* ends. Euclides' account is unique in that it is presented as a written composition. Does this mean that Euclides' narratorial authority is to be negotiated differently from that of Plato's other narrators? For example, should he be considered the author of everything found beyond the dialogue's dramatic frame?[55] Or is he just a passive transcriber of what Socrates communicated to him?[56] A comparison with Plato's other narrators seems appropriate here.

Euclides' activity does not differ in principle from the activity of Socrates, the narrator of *Republic* 1, who "edited for smoothness" his conversation with Thrasymachus (pp. 37–38), or from the activity of Apollodorus, the secondary narrator of the *Symposium*, who edited Aristodemus' report stylistically and with respect to the scope (pp. 94–95). Moreover, there is good reason to suppose that the *Parmenides*' switching from narrated to dramatic form, analogous to what we find in the *Theaetetus*, was also conceived by Plato as having been initiated by the secondary narrator, Antiphon (above, p. 41). Euclides is thus neither the author of the story he delivers nor a slavish transcriber of Socrates' words: the scope of his authority does not seem to deviate significantly from that of Plato's other narrators.[57]

54 For a detailed discussion of Euclides' editorial work see Kaklamanou and Pavlou 2016: 118–27.

55 See, e.g., Morgan 2003: 105: "Euclides in the *Theaetetus* performs the part of an author of *Sokratikoi logoi*." See also Tarrant 1996: 133; Halliwell 2009: 16; Capuccino 2014: 122–26.

56 So Blondell 2002: 306: "Eukleides is utterly incapable of producing an oral account, focusing rather on obtaining an accurate verbatim transcription." See also Halperin 1992: 112 n. 19; Giannopoulou 2014: 44–48. For a discussion see Kaklamanou and Pavlou 2016.

57 For a detailed discussion of the scope of the narrator's authority in Plato see Chapter 6.

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### 6.3 *Narrator-Hero (Implicit): Socrates*

On the third intradiegetic level – whose actual status, as Genette has pointed out, is blurred (Chapter 1) – the *Theaetetus* proceeds as a regular dramatic dialogue with Socrates as its implicit narrator. Socrates is also the dialogue's leading character, the other two being Theodorus of Cyrene and Theaetetus.

As we saw in the preliminary analysis of this part of the dialogue in Chapter 3, the story begins with Socrates gradually focalizing the information about Theaetetus that Theodorus supplies, until he eventually fixes his attention on Theaetetus himself (p. 51). Socrates' position in the *Theaetetus* closely resembles the one he holds in the narrated *Charmides* and *Lysis* (above, pp. 32–33). In these two dialogues, Socrates the narrator tells of how he was introduced to beautiful and promising youths highly praised by their friends and admirers. The irony however is that promising though he certainly is, Theaetetus is anything but beautiful: he looks very much like Socrates himself, and, just like Socrates, his lack of physical appeal conceals an extraordinary beauty of mind and soul. In particular, the entrance of Theaetetus and his friends is staged as a mirror-image of the entrance of Charmides in the eponymous dialogue (144b9–c3, cf. above, p. 32). Moreover, Theodorus' "if he had been a beauty (*kalos*) I should have been afraid to praise him, lest you should suppose that I was in love with him" (143e6–7) is the complete reversal of what we find in the *Charmides*.[58] All in all, it is hard to avoid the impression that here, tongue in cheek, Plato revisits this earlier dialogue, with Alcibiades' Silenus speech looming large in between.[59]

### 6.4 *Juxtaposition of the Frame and the Narrative*

The *Theaetetus* is therefore Socrates' story, as communicated to Euclides, about how Socrates made Theaetetus' acquaintance and caused the gifted youth to deliver his first intellectual offspring. But it is also Euclides' story of Theaetetus' death as a citizen-soldier as communicated to Terpsion, who absorbs it together with the reader. As in the *Symposium*, the juxtaposition of the main story and the dramatic frame creates a comprehensive retrospective of the life of the dialogue's protagonist.

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58 Cf. e.g. *Chrmd.* 154a. See also *Chrmd.* 154bc, Socrates' reaction to Charmides' beauty, quoted above, p. 33.

59 The present interpretation is not related to Thesleff's hypothesis that the *Theaetetus* as we have it is a revised version of a narrated dialogue belonging to Plato's early period, see Thesleff 1982: 232–33, 300–304; Tarrant 2010; Schultz 2015. On parallels with the *Symposium* see also Blondell 2002: 261.

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## 7 Conclusions

As mentioned earlier, the mixed dialogues were most likely Plato's own invention. What could make him open what looks like a regular narrated dialogue (the *Theaetetus* being the only exception) with a dramatic episode that not always even features those who participate in the subsequent discussion? The answer that immediately comes to mind is that just as in the case of the *Theaetetus* discussed in Chapter 1, by dramatizing the act of narration Plato economizes on one narrative level, thus avoiding the cumbersome arrangement that he tried to pursue in the *Parmenides*. And indeed, we have seen that despite their structural complexity, the majority of the mixed dialogues apparently contain only two narrative levels: the pseudo-extradiegetic level embodied in the dramatic frame and the intradiegetic level of the main narrative (two intradiegetic levels in the case of the *Symposium*). In fact, however, what these dialogues present as an extradiegetic act of narration is, as we have seen, nothing but an additional intradiegetic level in disguise. Just as in the dramatic dialogues, the extradiegetic act of narration is suppressed here as well.

However, economizing on narrative levels is only one aspect of what Plato has achieved by introducing the dramatic frame. Consider the following. Insofar as in the narrated dialogues the unpersonalized narratee merges with the story's implied reader/listener, these dialogues, just as any first- or third-person narrative, are open-ended by definition: the primary act of narration always belongs to the extradiegetic level (above, pp. 17–18). By suppressing the primary act of narration and personalizing the narratee as a full-fledged character, Plato effectively abolishes the open-endedness inherent in other forms of narrative by making both the narrator and the narratee intradiegetic. Again, the main narratives of the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Theaetetus* are addressed not to us but to Crito, to Echecrates, and to Terpsion, just as the main narratives of the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium* are addressed to unnamed fifth-century Athenians rather than to the humanity at large. To be sure, here and there Plato compensates for the loss of universal appeal that this arrangement implies – for example, in Crito's and Echecrates' metaleptic remarks in the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* respectively (above, p. 92 and n. 42) or in the anonymity of the narratees of the *Protagoras* and the *Symposium*. The question however is what he gains instead.

The feature shared by all dialogues of this group is the complex perspective resulting from juxtaposition of the dramatic frame and the framed narrative. Everything indicates that this complex perspective was part and parcel of the message Plato intended to deliver. In the *Euthydemus* and the *Protagoras* the juxtaposition of the frame and the framed allows the reader to contemplate

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the discrepancy between what the characters do and say on each one of the two levels of the dialogue and to reach his or her own conclusions concerning the complex message which emerges as a result (see also below, p. 115). In the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, and the *Theaetetus* the same juxtaposition creates a spatiotemporal gap, which allows the reader to establish an overall perspective of an event (Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*) or the protagonist's life (the life stories of Socrates and Theaetetus in the *Symposium* and the *Theaetetus* respectively).[60] Our ability to establish such a perspective derives from the temporal and spatial "closing" of the dialogues effected by the introduction of a personalized narratee.

Above all, however, it was Plato's lifelong tendency to privilege the dramatic over the narrated form that apparently triggered the introduction of the hybrid genre of the mixed dialogue. This tendency will be the focus of our attention in the next chapter.

60 Cf. Thesleff 1967: 41: "[I]t seems that Plato introduced the 'frame' (*Prt.*) to give an additional dimension to the work, experimented with it as a throughout counterpoint (*Euthd.*, *Phd.*), then (*Smp.*, *Prm.*) used it for justifying the increasing perspective of the second-hand and the third-hand report, and finally (*Tht.*) to justify his return to the dramatic form." Cf. also Capuccino 2014: 293–94: "I proemi esterni … invitano il lettore a considerare la *tensione* constitutiva della prosa platonica, riflesso della sua natura filosofica e non retorica" (original emphasis).

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# PART 2

# *The Interpretation*

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CHAPTER 5

# Plato's Experiments with Narrative Voice

## 1 Preliminary Remarks

In the course of his long career as a writer Plato never stopped experimenting with narrative voice. Assuming that his main concerns were philosophical rather than literary, it is amazing how much effort he invested in perfecting, adjusting, and revising this aspect of his literary art. We saw him reducing the multiple voices of the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus* to a single narrative voice of the other dialogues; replacing the impartial narrator-observer of the *Hippias Minor* with heavily biased ones; abandoning the contrasting narrative voices of the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus* in favor of the unison voices of the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, and the *Theaetetus*. We also saw him experimenting with multi-level narratives by introducing such literary strategies as dramatic frame and metalepsis. Last but not least, we saw him abandoning the narrated form and thematizing this strategic decision.

As we have seen, apart from the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, and the *Menexenus*, all Plato's dialogues are negotiated as narratives. These can be presented as distributed on a vertical axis. The dramatic and the narrated dialogues except the *Parmenides* have two narrative levels, the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic, but the dramatic dialogues suppress the extradiegetic act of narration, hence are presented as possessing a single narrative level. Of the so-called mixed dialogues, the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, and the *Phaedo* have three narrative levels: – two intradiegetic and the extradiegetic, but they suppress the extradiegetic act of narration, hence are presented as possessing two narrative levels. Finally, the *Symposium*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Parmenides* are located at the top of the pyramid, having four narrative levels: – three intradiegetic and the extradiegetic. However, the *Symposium* suppresses the extradiegetic act of narration and presents itself as having three narrative levels, whereas the *Theaetetus* suppresses both the extradiegetic and all the intradiegetic levels, thus transforming itself into a wholly dramatic dialogue. Of the dialogues of this group, only the *Parmenides* makes all its narrative levels explicit.

Since the narrative voice in Plato's dialogues has been analyzed above in the categories of contemporary literary theory, and since Plato could not have had such categories in mind, one must ask what he was aiming at by experimenting with the narrative voice as he did. For at least an approximate answer, in this

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chapter I shall trace what transpire as the major turning points in Plato's career as a writer. As far as I can judge, three such turning points emerge:
(a) introduction of a single focus of perception;
(b) introduction of multi-level narratives;
(c) abandonment of narrated form.
Let us examine the directions Plato's literary composition has taken as a result.

## 2 A Single Focus of Perception

Early in his career as a writer, Plato removed from his dialogues all but one focus of perception, thereby investing them with a single narratorial authority. The latter is explicit in Plato's narrated texts (the fully narrated dialogues and the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues) and implicit in the dramatic ones (the fully dramatic dialogues and the dramatic parts of the mixed dialogues). Although the model of implicit narrator dealt with in this book was thematized in full only as late as the *Theaetetus*, its relevance is supported by Plato's introduction in *Republic* 3 of the narrative category "diegesis through mimesis" (Chapter 1) and by the evidence provided by the dialogues whose narrator is explicit or explicitly accounted for as suppressed. In all dialogues in this category, that is, the narrated dialogues, the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues, and the *Theaetetus*, the source of narratorial authority has been shown to coincide with the focus of perception. In other words, Plato's narrator is the one who focalizes the narrative in its entirety.

This of course does not mean that characters other than the narrator do not focalize. However, the characters' focalization never affects the entire dialogue: although the characters may well contribute perceptions of their own, the macro-focalization of the narratives in which they take part is effected by the narrator (Chapter 2, with n. 37). Characteristically, the characters' focalization does not usually disagree with the narrator's perception. Thus Meno repeats almost verbatim Socrates' observation that Anytus is getting angry; Phaedrus intensifies Socrates' references to the landscape, the time of day, and the interlocutors' appearance; Socrates echoes Eudicus' words about the conversation's setting; Polus and Gorgias reiterate the appeal to the audience initiated by Chaerephon, and so on.[1]

As we have seen, the markers of focalization that regularly accompany the explicit narrator of Plato's narrated texts are (a) a description of the dialogue's

1 *Meno* 99e2 and above, n. 30 to Chapter 3; *Phdr*. 229a9–b9, 242a3–5, 279b5–6 and above, n. 34 to Chapter 3; *Hi.mi*. 363a3–4, and p. 63 n. 39; *Grg*. 473e4–5, 506a8–b3, and n. 49 to Chapter 3.

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setting; (b) a gradual focusing on a single object of attention ("zooming in"); (c) registration of the characters' appearance, movements, and emotional responses; (d) limitation of the scope of the narrative to the narrator's personal experience. Since these markers consistently characterize the narrator while excluding any other character, we have good reason to regard them as signals of narratorial authority. The same markers of focalization emerge in Plato's dramatic texts, where they also point to a single focus of perception. This indicates that the markers of focalization should be approached as signals of narratorial authority in the dramatic texts as well; accordingly, their bearers should be identified as implicit narrators of the texts in question. This conclusion allows us to treat narrative voice in the narrated, dramatic, and mixed dialogues using the same criteria.

In the dialogues employing a *narrator-hero* – that is, those whose narrator both focalizes the narrative and leads the conversation,[2] – the introduction of a single focus of perception results in the narrator finding himself in a uniquely privileged position. Not that no opinions except for those of the narrator are admitted: some of Socrates' opponents in this group of dialogues, for example, Hippias, Protagoras, Callicles, or Thrasymachus, are very outspoken indeed in their criticism of Socrates and his views. But all such dissident opinions, as well as their bearers, pass through the filter of the narrator's perception, and are accordingly represented on the narrator's terms rather than their own. Kathryn Morgan's assessment of Socrates the narrator in the *Charmides*, the *Republic*, and the *Protagoras* seems in place here:

> Socrates' intrusions into the narrative, however, make his own bias overt. The reader becomes aware that Socrates selects and interprets in line with his own interests and goals. One might ask how fair Socrates' interpretations are (given that they mostly show his opponents in a bad light), and even question the precision of his edited version of the conversations.[3]

The effect Morgan describes is entirely due to Plato's skillful deployment of focalization: Socrates focalizes Ion, Critias, Hippias, Anytus, Protagoras, Thrasymachus, but their focalization of Socrates is "switched off" (cf. above, pp. 56–57, on the *Ion*); only Socrates' own perception of their embarrassment and

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2 The *Ion,* the *Hippias Maior,* the *Charmides*, the *Lysis*, the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Cratylus*, the *Meno*, the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Laws*.

3 Morgan 2004: 364. Cf. also Bowery 2007: 106 n. 16: "In the narrated dialogues, each of these Socratic characters is filtered through the lens of Socrates the narrator."

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anger is registered.[4] This leaves us with the spurious *Cleitophon* as the only example of a criticism of Socrates not mediated by Socrates himself or by one of his associates.[5]

Such unilateral focalization is even more pronounced in the dialogues where Socrates' interlocutors are young people whom he tutors, as it were, in the art of dialectic. This situation, as Ruby Blondell put it, endows him with "a much more authoritative pedagogical posture." Blondell's assessment of Socrates' interaction with Glaucon and Adeimantus in *Republic* 2–10 deserves to be quoted in full:

> Despite this collaborative tone, however, the dialectical enterprise has now become unabashedly hierarchical. The elenctic Socrates did, of course, dominate his conversations. But his dominance was both veiled in self-deprecation and subject to the constraints imposed by the interlocutor. In Books 2–10, by contrast, Socratic dominance is openly acknowledged by all concerned.[6]

In itself, the hierarchical relationship Blondell refers to has nothing to do with narrative voice: compare indeed the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, or the *Statesman*, whose leading interlocutors – Socrates, Parmenides, the Eleatic Stranger – apply the same conversational strategy in narratives delivered by someone else.[7] Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that conversations of this kind are invariably accompanied by the almost complete removal of traces of perception – or indeed of any kind of emotional response – from the younger interlocutors' utterances s (cf. above, pp. 36–37, on the scarcity of emotions in *Republic* 2–10). In sum, therefore, whether his interlocutors are antagonistic or supportive, no focus of perception other than the narrator is permitted in the dialogues whose narrator is also their leading character.

On the surface, the situation should be different in the dialogues that employ a *narrator-observer*.[8] Not being the dialogue's leading character, the

4 Cf. Blondell 2002: 197, on *Republic* 1: "Another function of Sokrates' narrative role, as Plato exploits it, is to undermine the legitimacy of Thrasymachos' views by representing them as inseparable from his peculiarly offensive character." Cf. also Rowe 2007: 11; Schofield 2008: 63. On Socrates' descriptions of his opponents see also above, pp. 33, 35, 82.

5 Cf. Hutchinson 1997: 965: "It comes as quite a surprise to see a Platonic dialogue in which Socrates is the target of attack and fails to have the last word."

6 Blondell 2002: 200.

7 Cf. Zuckert 1998: 895, on application of this kind of strategy by Parmenides in the *Parmenides*; cf. also Irwin 1986, who proposes a more nuanced approach.

8 The *Hippias Minor*, the *Laches*, the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, the *Philebus*.

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narrator-observer is positioned so as to enjoy a degree of impartiality that the autodiegetic narrator can hardly afford. Yet, the only dialogue in which we encounter an impartial narrator-observer is the early *Hippias Minor*. Eudicus mediates between the opponents without explicitly siding with either; as a result, his position allows the dialogue to preserve the aspect of bifocality – the very aspect, it should be added, which became responsible for the interpreters' perplexity as regards Socrates' views expressed in this dialogue.[9] Considering that Plato never repeated this kind of arrangement, it seems reasonable to suppose that he ranked his first attempt at employing narrator-observer as nothing short of failure.

The situation with the other dialogues employing a narrator-observer is different. Although these dialogues involve multiple participants who display a wide array of conflicting opinions, the plurality of the speakers' opinions is never accompanied by a plurality of points of view. Whatever opinions the participants may hold, only one perspective is available, that of the narrator. As with Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1, the result is that we do not really know how the people expressing various opinions perceive their interlocutors or the conversation in which they take part.[10] Their points of view are communicated to us, if at all, through the mediation of the narrator-observer.[11]

Although no longer the narrator, in the dialogues employing a narrator-observer Socrates is still the leading character.[12] Yet rather than focalizing the narrative, now he himself is being focalized. We saw how this was done in the *Parmenides*, the *Laches*, the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium*. Characteristically, only in the dialogues employing a narrator-observer can we visualize Socrates the man and hear his praises. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* show us how Socrates looked and behaved in everyday life; the *Parmenides* shows Zenon's and Parmenides' admiration for Socrates as a youth; the *Laches* and the *Symposium* extol Socrates' military record; the *Gorgias* presents clearly and unambiguously his choice of the philosophical life; and the *Phaedo* delivers his intellectual biography and portrays in detail how he met his death. None of this would have been possible had the narrator-hero been the only kind of

9 Above, p. 64. See also p. 66, on the difference between Eudicus of the *Hippias Minor* and Lysimachus of the *Laches*.

10 Embedded narratives being the only exception; see e.g. Alcibiades' reminiscences in the *Symposium*.

11 Cf. above, p. 95, on Aristodemus' selective presentation of speeches in the *Symposium*. See also above, Chapter 2, on the *Parmenides*: the reaction of Parmenides and Zeno to the youthful Socrates' exposition of the Theory of Forms is explicitly presented in terms of Pythodorus' perception of it (pp. 42–43).

12 The dialogues employing Socrates himself as narrator-observer constitute a special case; they are treated separately in Section 4 below.

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narrator Plato employed. The reason is simple: as we have observed more than once, in the dialogues in which he assumes the role of narrator Socrates "sees" in the Genettian sense[13] without being "seen."

It follows then that both the dialogues employing a narrator-hero and those employing a narrator-observer unambiguously privilege Socrates and his arguments. This seems to indicate that, contrary to the widespread view, Plato's dialogues cannot be considered multivocal, or "dialogic," in Bakhtin's sense.[14] Malcolm Schofield's observation that at least in some respects the Ciceronian dialogues may claim to be more truly dialogic than the dialogues of Plato is a helpful caveat in this respect:

> In dialogues such as *Academica*, *De Finibus*, *De Natura Deorum* and *De Divinatione* Cicero gives properly argued alternatives a real run for their money, and adopts a variety of literary strategies for indicating that further reflection on their merits and choice between them is left to the reader.

However, no such opportunity is provided, for example, to the reader of Plato's *Republic*, where "[c]onversion to the Socratic viewpoint is the objective, not balanced consideration of the alternatives."[15]

Consider indeed the following. Focalized by Socrates himself or by one of his associates, beliefs and opinions of others are habitually paraded at the beginning of the dialogue, only to be subsequently demolished or rejected outright: Laches' view of courage, Lysis' view of friendship, Charmides' view of temperance, Meno's view of virtue, Gorgias' view of rhetoric, Theaetetus' view of knowledge, the first five speeches about love in the *Symposium*, Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus*, and so on.[16] Only Socrates' view is privileged. And although it cannot be denied that Plato's dialogues usually end in aporia (thus in the earlier dialogues) or in indeterminacy (thus in the middle and the later ones), neither is ever effected by the arguments of Socrates' opponents.

This does not mean however that Schofield is fully justified in claiming that no properly argued alternatives are presented to Plato's reader. But rather than from a plurality of voices, these alternatives issue from a single voice, that of

13 Genette 1980: 186.
14 For the most recent exposition of the thesis of Plato's multivocality see Schur 2014: 19–40.
15 Schofield 2008: 63, 64. Cf. Rowe 2007: 32.
16 Cf. M. Frede 1992: 212, on the aporetic dialogues: "It is not his [the questioner's] beliefs and his authority which are under test, but the respondent's." The argument in Sheffield 2006 as regards Plato's "endoxic method" in the *Symposium* seems to be applicable to other dialogues as well.

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the dialogue's protagonist. Socrates' two speeches in the *Phaedrus*, one neutralizing the other and being neutralized in turn by the subsequent discussion, immediately come to mind in this connection. The *Phaedrus*, however, is just a particularly eye-catching example of numerous other cases where the protagonist presents his own alternative views of the same issue in one and the same dialogue. This is the main cause of the indeterminacy with in Plato's dialogues frequently end.[17] As Donald Davidson remarked apropos the *Euthydemus,* the *Hippias Maior*, and the *Lysis*: "In these dialogues there is philosophical argument, but Socrates carries on essentially by himself, acting both as proposer and as critic."[18]

In view of this, it would be no exaggeration to say that the truly dialogic aspect of Plato's narratives lies in the protagonist's own mind, that is, ultimately, in the mind of the author. The following passage from the *Theaetetus* speaks volumes in this respect:

> [By thinking (*to dianoeisthai*)] I mean the conversation (*logon*) which the soul holds with herself in investigating any subject. I am now telling you something which I do not really understand, but the soul when thinking appears to me to be doing nothing else as conversing (*dialegesthai*) – asking questions of herself and answering them, affirming and denying. And when she has arrived at a decision, either by a long circuit or by a sudden leap, and has at last agreed, and does not doubt, this is called her opinion (*doxan*). I say, then, that to form an opinion is to speak (*legein*), and opinion is a word spoken (*logon eirēmenon*) – I mean, to oneself and in silence, not aloud and to another.[19]

Michael Frede comments:

> Notoriously Plato believes that thinking, that arriving at some view concerning some question at issue, is a matter of internal dialogue one's reason engages in with itself (cf. *Theaet.* 189E, *Soph.* 263E). Thus, one might think, the dialectical discussion and hence the written dialogue are supposed to reflect, to be some kind of materialization of, the internal

17 See e.g. *Ly.* 218c, *Resp.* 343a, *Prm.* 144d, *Tht.* 195bc, *Soph.* 239b, *Plt.* 262c.

18 Davidson 2013: 6.

19 *Tht.* 189e6–190a6. Cf. *Soph.* 263e, *Phlb.* 38ce. As Ruth Scodel points out to me, *Hippias Maior* 304d1-e2, where Socrates says that he is constantly questioned (304d2 ἀεί με ἐλέγχοντος) by a person who is his closest relative and dwells in the same place, actually amounts to the same thing. For a nuanced discussion of this passage see Long 2013: 46–63.

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> dialogue of the soul, of reason, with itself. And it is no doubt that in these terms Plato himself also thinks of dialectical argument, e.g. when he makes Socrates say that we should follow the *logos* (i.e. the reason or the argument) wherever it leads.[20]

The result is an interaction of multiple arguments played out in Plato's mind. The manner in which they are arranged seems to indicate that while Plato certainly privileged some arguments over others, he deliberately abstained from endowing the argument he privileged with the status of sole embodiment of absolute truth.

To recapitulate, at the beginning of his literary career Plato made a choice between bifocal presentation, still manifest in some of his earlier dialogues, and a single narrative perspective through which everything found in the text, including diverse opinions expressed by the characters, is filtered. He predicated this single perspective on the figure of the first-person narrator who focalizes the text in its entirety.

## 3 Multiple Narrative Levels

Everything indicates that Plato's multi-level narratives as represented by the mixed dialogues and the *Parmenides* developed out of such simply structured narrated dialogues as the *Charmides* and the *Lysis* (above, pp. 80, 101). Yet, by introducing what is sometimes seen as hardly more than topping the narrated dialogues with a dramatic, or in the case of the *Parmenides* a narrative frame, Plato created narrative opportunities not provided by the dialogues with a single narrator.

It may seem strange that a frame *story*, familiar to us from such classical texts as *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Canterbury Tales*, or *The Decameron*, only emerges in Plato as late as the *Parmenides* and comes after a series of dialogues that employ a frame *drama* instead, namely the *Protagoras*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium*. Moreover, Plato was obviously not satisfied with his only attempt at producing a frame story, for he abandoned it immediately after the *Parmenides* (if not in the course of it; see above, pp. 7–8) and the dramatic frame was restored, one last time, in the *Theaetetus*.

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20 M. Frede 1992: 218. See also Sedley 2003: 1–2, on Plato's dialogues as externalization of his own thought-processes; *contra* Rowe 2007: 8 (with n. 20), 12, 33–35. For a book-length treatment of the issue see Long 2013.

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But Plato's adoption of frame drama rather than frame story will look much less peculiar if we take into account that the Greek literary tradition had no precedent for a full-scale framed narrative. A likely candidate is of course the so-called Apologue, Odysseus' tale of his wanderings narrated to the Phaeacians in Books 9–12 of the Homeric *Odyssey*. But as distinct from *The Thousand and One Nights* and other framed narratives, the Apologue's narrative frame does not embrace the entire *Odyssey*, and Odysseus is not the poem's primary narrator. It is rather a story within a story, so that a parallel with, for example, Socrates' tale of his meeting with Diotima in the *Symposium* would be more appropriate here.[21] It is reasonable, therefore, to credit Plato, among other things, with creating the first full-scale frame narratives in Western literary tradition.

Judging by the brevity and simplicity of its dramatic frame, it is not out of the question that the *Protagoras* was Plato's first experiment with multi-level narrative.[22] As we have seen, the introduction of an additional narrative level afforded Plato the opportunity to establish a perspective on the great sophist that did not fully harmonize with the one found in the body of the dialogue. This invested the *Protagoras* with narrative possibilities not available in the single-level dialogues.

The *Euthydemus*, a dialogue whose handling of the dramatic frame is otherwise very similar to what we find in the *Protagoras* (above, pp. 101–102), inaugurated yet another breakthrough. Indeed, everything indicates that it was in this dialogue that metalepsis, isolated examples of which had already been present in the *Charmides* and the *Protagoras* (above, pp. 34, 82–83), was first introduced as a full-fledged narrative strategy consistently applied throughout the dialogue. The same strategy was pursued to even greater effect in the *Phaedo*. In both the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo* metalepsis affects the entire dialogue, becoming an integral part of the plot structure. Characters belonging to the dramatic frame intrude into the story, collapsing the barrier between different narrative levels and making the reception of the dialogue an integral element of the plot (above, Chapter 4).

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21 Cf. Wolf 2006: 183: "If it [the criterion of dominance] is employed in a quantitative sense only, Homer's Odyssey cannot be classed as a frame story, for Ulyssess' embedded stories only comprise parts of book VII and books IX to XII…" In Genette's classification, Odysseus' status in *Odyssey* 9–12 is that of the intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator, "a narrator in the second degree who tells his own story"; see Genette 1980: 248, cf. de Jong 2004: 2. On the distinction between a story within a story and frame narrative see Fludernik 1996: 257. On the distinction between Odysseus' narrative and Socrates' narrative in the *Republic* see Ferrari 2010: 22.

22 Cf. Thesleff 1967: 41, quoted above, n. 60 to Chapter 4.

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As already pointed out, Plato's practice of frame-breaking as pursued in his mixed dialogues should not be confounded with breaking the boundaries of the fictional world through intrusion of the real world into the fictional one, or vice versa; when put into narratological terms, this would amount to interpenetration of the extradiegetic narrative level and the intradiegetic domain (above, p. 22). In the ancient Greek literary tradition this kind of metalepsis is best exemplified by parabasis, the chorus' direct address to the audience, which was an integral part of the comedies of Aristophanes and Old Attic Comedy generally.[23] But the only instances of Plato's use of metalepsis that involve the extradiegetic level are the *Charmides* – Socrates apostrophic addresses to his extradiegetic narratee purporting to express his admiration for Charmides' beauty, and *Republic* 1 – Socrates' remark about the extradiegetic act of narration in which he takes part (above, Chapter 2). It is hardly mere chance that both these instances belong to the dialogues with only one intradiegetic level (see p. 105).

In the multi-level dialogues, the situation is different. Crito of the *Euthydemus* and Echecrates of the *Phaedo* only *represent* the real-life narratees of Socrates and Phaedo, respectively, who in turn only *represent* extradiegetic narrators.[24] Accordingly, the breaking of boundaries produced by Crito' and Echecrates' intrusions into the narrated world is fully enclosed within the intradiegetic domain. This can be illustrated by the following example of intradiegetic frame-breaking highlighted by Werner Wolf:

> Where this device [metaleptic frame-breaks] is used, a paradoxical transgression takes place between framing border and framed text. This can, for instance, be seen in Michael Ende's *Die Unendliche Geschichte* (1979), where the principal character of the framing, a little boy reading a fairy tale book, is suddenly able to enter the world of this fairy tale not only metaphorically ... but in person.[25]

23 On the parabasis as marking "a distinctive moment of frame-breaking" see Whitmarsh 2013: 13.

24 On the pseudo-extradiegetic status of the dramatic frame in Plato's mixed dialogues see above, pp. 77–78.

25 Wolf 2006: 201–202. Wolf proceeds as follows: "Often metalepses (which, of course, can also take place between the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic levels) serve a recipient-centred function (by undermining aesthetic illusion) as well as an implicitly metafictional function: by stretching the (fantasy) potential of imaginary worlds to an unrealistic, even 'impossible' extent, metalepses lay bare the ruling frame of such worlds which is usually concealed, namely their fictionality."

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This is precisely what Crito of the *Euthydemus* and Echecrates of the *Phaedo* do. Wolfgang Petersen's 1984 film based on Ende's book, *The Never Ending Story*, in which the process of frame-breaking is vividly enacted, gives an excellent illustration of the effect produced.

In all the cases involved, metalepsis works in Plato as a highly effective distancing strategy. The audience is reminded of the fictionality of the narrated world and is prevented from fully immersing in it. Having several narrative voices intrude into the narrated world of the *Symposium* and the *Parmenides* (above, pp. 43, 96) is obviously meant to serve the same purpose. To quote Richard Hunter, "Plato's various experiments with dramatic frames show his persistent concern to advertise and problematize the fictional status of his dialogues."[26]

Beyond metalepsis, there is no denying that in the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Theaetetus* Plato put the multi-level narrative to a different use from that in the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus*. We saw in Chapter 4 that in those two the dramatic frame on the one hand and the framed narrative on the other introduce contrasting perspectives on Protagoras and Euthydemus and their arguments, thus inviting readers to form their own opinion. In a manner recalling the *Euthyphro* and the *Crito*, the frame and the narrative of the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus* present diverse points of view that are not mediated by one overarching narrative voice nor harmonized to produce a uniform message. Not so with the other multi-level dialogues. In the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Theaetetus* Plato uses the Chinese-box arrangement not in order to introduce contrasting perspectives but in order to multiply the perspective of the main story to deepen its temporal dimension and create a multi-layered but uniform picture of the dialogue's subject.

Characteristically, in both the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus* the spatio-temporal opportunities offered by the multi-level arrangement are left unexplored. In the *Protagoras*, the encounter of the narrator and the narratee occurs on the same day as the events of the narrated story, whereas in the *Euthydemus* it occurs the next day. This indifference to time depth clearly indicates that at least as regards these two dialogues the author's agenda should be sought elsewhere. The situation is different in the other multi-level dialogues. The time gap between the dramatic frame and the framed narrative, in the *Phaedo* still bridgeable by a single narrator, in the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Theaetetus* becomes so substantial that a chain of several narrators has

26 Hunter 2004: 22, and above, p. 96 n. 50. For an analogous interpretation of frame-breaking in Plato see McCabe 2008: 105–106. On Plato's distancing strategies in general see Finkelberg 2006: 65–68.

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to be used; moreover, in the *Phaedo* and the *Theaetetus* the dramatic frame and the framed narrative lie distant from each other in space as well as time.

Rather than offering two contrasting points of view, in the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Theaetetus* the frame and the framed are fully in accord. Each successive level echoes and further enhances the significance of the dialogue's subject – be it Socrates' life and death, the meeting of Socrates and Parmenides, or the life story of Theaetetus – without questioning the perspective in which it is presented. Such a transition from diverse narrative perspectives to a uniform one parallels a similar development which, as we have seen, took place in the dramatic dialogues.

Yet, despite their giving rise to such indisputable masterpieces as the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*, multi-level narratives were just an episode in Plato's literary career. They reached the peak of complexity with the *Symposium*, only to be abandoned altogether soon after. The *Parmenides*, again, seems to have played a decisive role in this development. It is indeed difficult to see this dialogue's structural arrangement as anything other than a failed attempt to replace the dramatic with the narrative frame. Apparently purporting to emphasize the interval between the moment of narration and the chronologically implausible encounter of Socrates and Parmenides, here Plato, for the first and only time in his literary career, made all narrative levels explicit. Judging by the sudden abandonment of reported speech in the second part of the dialogue, already in the process of writing he came to the conclusion that this innovation was not worth pursuing. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato's last multi-level dialogue, the dramatic frame was restored, but the narrated form was abandoned altogether. To all intents and purposes the *Theaetetus* is a dramatic dialogue, as are the dialogues that followed it.

## 4 Abandonment of the Narrated Form

### 4.1 *The Transitional Dialogues*

It has been suggested more than once that the *Theaetetus*' programmatic abandonment of the narrated form signaled Plato's adoption of dramatic dialogue as his only literary medium. Indeed, all Plato's late dialogues – the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, the *Philebus*, the *Laws* – are dramatic through and through.[27] That is not to say that the decisive turn to the dramatic

27 Cf. Thesleff 1967: 15–16, 37; Guthrie 1978: 64; Brandwood 1990: 1, 251; Sedley 2002: 16 and n. 26; Morgan 2004: 360. Erler 2006: 53, also includes the *Parmenides* in this list, apparently on account of its being partly dramatic; formally, however, the *Parmenides* is a narrated dialogue, not to mention the fact that *Tht*. 183e, Socrates referring to his meeting

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form was effected solely by the agency of the *Theaetetus*. We have seen that in the narrated *Parmenides*, which must have been written in close proximity to the *Theaetetus*, dramatic form also eventually prevailed.

The *Parmenides* stands midway between the dialogues that, like the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*, employ a narrator-observer who focuses his attention on Socrates and the later ones, such as the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, in which Socrates himself assumes the role of narrator-observer. While in the narrated part of the dialogue everything serves to showcase the young Socrates and his accomplishments (above, pp. 43–44), in the dramatic part Socrates becomes one of the silent witnesses of the dialectical procedure carried out by Parmenides with the assistance of Aristoteles, his chosen interlocutor. This section of the *Parmenides* brings us very close indeed to those late dialogues in which, as in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, Socrates is presented as an observer and silent witness of a dialectical inquiry led by someone else (above, pp. 72–73).

A similar twofold arrangement is also characteristic of the *Phaedrus*. Whether written before or after the *Theaetetus* (both opinions circulate in the scholarly literature), the prevailing consensus is that the *Phaedrus* belongs to the cluster of the "late middle" dialogues, which also comprises the *Republic* (or parts of it), the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus*.[28] Both philosophically and stylistically the dialogue falls into two distinctly heterogeneous parts. According to Charles Kahn, this heterogeneity is due to the *Phaedrus* being a transitional "Janus-like" dialogue, looking backwards and forwards:

> And whereas the myth of the first part is built around the doctrine of Forms as known from the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, the philosophical center of the second part is an account of dialectic that ignores the metaphysical Forms but announces a logical technique of definition by Collection and Division – by determining unities and pluralities – that will be exemplified in Plato's later writings, the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*.[29]

The dichotomy diagnosed by Kahn is neatly reflected in the way the dialogue is presented to the reader. On the one hand, the first part of the *Phaedrus* is indisputably the visually richest text in the entire Platonic corpus. Its rendering of the summer landscape along the banks of the Ilissus, put in Socrates' mouth (quoted above, p. 61), is justly acclaimed as one of the finest descriptions of nature

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with Parmenides, strongly suggests that when this dialogue was written the *Parmenides* already existed. Cf. Rutherford 1995: 273, and above, Chapter 1, n. 19.

28 See, e.g., Thesleff 1967: 8; Thesleff 1982: 153–63 (a historical survey), 317–26; Brandwood 1990: 250–51; Kahn 1996: 48, 380–82; Kahn 2002; Irwin 2008: 79.

29 Kahn 1996: 372. On the plot structure of the *Phaedrus* see also below, pp. 126–27.

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in the entire body of ancient Greek literature. But the *Phaedrus*' privileging of descriptive language concerns not only the landscape. As we have seen, the interlocutors' body language is described frequently and in detail (Chapter 3). No less significantly, such descriptions are often used for plot building (more below, pp. 125–27). But all this exuberance disappears as soon as we reach the dialogue's second part: the transformation in style mirrors that in the philosophical content. The stylistic gap thus produced resembles that between *Republic* 1 and *Republic* 2–10 or between the narrated and the dramatic parts of the *Parmenides*. Plato's ability to radically transform his style in one and the same dialogue shows that contrary to what many are ready to admit, even in his dialogues that may look as less rewarding aesthetically (the late dialogues immediately come to mind) Plato was in full command of his literary art.[30]

As if trying to make a point, Plato demonstrates again and again in the *Phaedrus*' first part that a dramatic dialogue is suited to accomplish everything a narrated dialogue does, and even more. In the second part, however, he no less convincingly drives it home that this is not the kind of dramatic dialogue he intends or indeed recommends pursuing after all. "Here, as at the end of the *Tempest*, the magician breaks his wand and embarks on a new course."[31] It is difficult to avoid the impression that the *Theaetetus* and the *Phaedrus* complement each other here. While the *Theaetetus* makes a statement to the effect that the explicit narrator is in fact redundant, the *Phaedrus* shows how a text with no explicit narrator can nevertheless function as a full-fledged narrative. That is why in everything regarding narrative voice the *Phaedrus* should be seen as no less programmatic than the *Theaetetus*. Togeher with the *Parmenides* they inaugurate Plato's late period.[32]

### 4.2 *The Late Dialogues*

Plato's late period saw intensive experimentation with narrative voice. First and foremost, Plato radically reduced the amount of overtly marked focalization, mainly by concentrating its markers in the dialogues' openings: this is the hallmark of both the *Sophist-Statesman* and the *Timaeus-Critias* (Chapter 3). In the *Laws* the markers of focalization, though present in the body of the text,

30 Cf. Rutherford 1995: 276–81.

31 Kahn 1996: 382.

32 Thesleff 1967: 18, explicitly associates the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Phaedrus* with Plato's final abandoning of reported form. On the history of the study of relative chronology of Plato's dialogues, in which the establishment of the position of the *Phaedrus* had an important role, see Thesleff 1982, esp. 153–63; Brandwood 1990; Kahn 1996: 42–48. For a useful overview of the current scholarly consensus ("the standard view") regarding the chronological order of the dialogues see Irwin 2008: 77–84.

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are scarce, especially considering the dialogue's length. Even in the *Philebus*, the most vivid of the late dialogues, the markers of focalization repeatedly intimate intellectual rather than sensual perception (see above, p. 69).

All this results in the late dialogues' much more austere atmosphere. As Benjamen Jowett put it in the Introduction to his translation of the *Statesman*: "He has banished the poets, and is beginning to use technical language."[33] The vividness of the early and middle dialogues, mainly due to the narrator's visual acknowledgement of the characters' appearance, movements, and emotional states, has given way to abstract language and almost impersonal descriptions of predominantly intellectual responses. The single focus of perception is still there, but we are never told what the Eleatic Stranger, the Younger Socrates, Timaeus, Philebus, or even the youthful Protarchus look like or what their feelings might be.

It is tempting to associate this change with the vision of the commendable form of mimesis outlined in *Republic* 3. Let us quote it again:

> For the sake of utility we for our part would employ the more austere and less pleasant poet or storyteller, who will imitate for us the style of the decent man, and will follow those models which we prescribed at first when we began the education of our warriors.[34]

This change in the manner of presentation can be traced both to the exchange between Parmenides and Aristoteles in the second part of the *Parmenides* and to the discussion of speaking and writing in the second part of the *Phaedrus* addressed in the previous section. Both contain *in nuce* such a hallmark of the late dialogues as separation between the intense focalization at the beginning and its almost complete absence in the body of the dialogue.

The *Philebus* inaugurated an innovation of a different kind. Plato reverses the perspective of Socrates' "pedagogical" conversations, in that he focalizes the dialogue through Socrates' young interlocutor rather than through Socrates himself (above, pp. 69–70). Together with Protarchus and his friends, the reader takes an active part in the process of acquiring knowledge, which results in

33 Jowett 1892: 2. On "an unmistakable move towards blandness and lack of individuality in the characterization of both the dominant speaker and his interlocutors" in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* see Blondell 2002: 316; on the lack of stylistic characterization in the late dialogues in general see Thesleff 1967: 132; Rutherford 1995: 274–76.

34 *Resp*. 398a8–b4, cf. above, p. 4. Cf. also *Resp*. 396c7–d1 "he will be most ready to imitate the good man when he is acting steadfastly and sensibly" and *Plt*. 286d4–6 (on the dialogue's length) "for we shall never require such a length as is suited to give pleasure, unless as a secondary matter" and below, Chapter 6, with n. 31.

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a sweeping demonstration of Socrates' beneficial influence on his audience as explicitly acknowledged by Protarchus.[35]

Finally, the smooth and uneventful conversation of three old men depicted in the *Laws* is unique in that it abolishes the pattern of both the "elenctic" and "pedagogical" discussion. To quote R.B. Rutherford,

> The relationship between the three speakers does not change: throughout, the Athenian is the authoritative figure, and the other two follow his lead, with only occasional dissent or surprise (much more often, enthusiastic approval). There are no sudden interventions by others, and the environment makes little impact on their lengthy stroll.[36]

Considering that here, for the first time in Plato, Socrates is not found among the interlocutors, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Plato must have regarded the narrative form of the *Laws* as boldly experimental.

Let us return for a moment to the *Sophist-Statesman* and *Timaeus-Critias*. In these four dialogues Socrates assumes a new role of narrator-observer – the "theater," as he refers to himself on one occasion (p. 73). However, this role is negotiated differently from the other dialogues that employ the same type of narrator. In the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, or the *Symposium* the narrator's mediating presence is felt all along. Even in the *Laches*, whose implicit narrator withdraws into the background at a relatively early stage, he re-emerges at the end of the dialogue, thereby emphasizing the continuity of his involvement (above, p. 66). On the other hand, in the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias*, after appearing in the opening episode Socrates ceases to participate in the conversation. Formally one of the participants, now he in fact takes on the role of the dialogue's audience. Significantly, as the theater metaphor of the *Critias* makes clear, his reception of the dialogue is not only audial but also visual. The implications of Plato's placing the narrator in the position of a spectator of his own narrative will be further explored in Chapter 7.

To sum up, Plato's dissatisfaction with narrated form, first expressed in the transitional dialogues, in the late dialogues not only crystallized but also led to a series of literary experiments. It would perhaps be somewhat simplistic

35 In his concluding words in the eponymous dialogue Theaetetus also acknowledges the positive impact that the conversation with Socrates has had on him; see *Tht.* 210b6–7: "By Zeus, Socrates, I have said a good deal more than I ever had to say." On the whole, however, it is Socrates' point of view as regards the beneficial influence of his maieutic skills that prevails throughout the dialogue. On Socrates' attitude to Theaetetus see Blondell 2002: 252–56.

36 Rutherford 1995: 302.

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to suggest, together with Leonard Brandwood, that Plato's abandoning the narrated form was a by-product of the "wearisome repetition" of "I said" and similar expressions in the *Republic*, whose last books were presumably written at the same time as the transitional dialogues or immediately before them.[37] However that may be, it is noteworthy that, as we shall see in Chapter 7, the *Republic*, the transitional dialogues, and the late dialogues form a continuum also in that all of them give expression to a train of thought, absent from Plato's earlier work, which equates the dialogue to a work of visual art.

## 5 Conclusions

It would be tempting to suggest that Plato started his literary career by composing both narrated dialogues, a subgenre of the Socratic dialogue which he explored alongside the other Socratics (pp. 28–30), and dramatic dialogues, which were probably his own invention (pp. 49–50),[38] and that he subsequently modified the new subgenre of dramatic dialogue by introducing a single focus of perception. But it is equally possible that for some time during his early career Plato had simultaneously explored both the bifocal and the unifocal option, until the latter eventually prevailed. Be that as it may, this much is certain: Plato's treatment of narrative voice must have passed through the following stages:

(a) At the first stage Plato introduced the bifocal dramatic dialogues, with or without an impartial mediator, probably modelled on mimes (the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, the *Menexenus*, and the *Hippias Minor*) and modified the narrated dialogues by adding a dramatic frame,[39] thereby turning them into multifocal multi-level narratives (the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus*). This development did not involve the purely narrated dialogues with their inbuilt single narrative voice (the *Charmides* and the *Lysis*).

(b) At the second stage Plato turned from a multiplicity of voices, clearly discernible in both the dramatic and the mixed dialogues of the previous stage, to a single narrative voice in the dramatic dialogues (the *Ion*, the *Hippias Maior*, and the *Meno*) and several unison voices in the multi-level dialogues (the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*). Moreover, in the dramatic

37 Brandwood 1990: 251.

38 A similar kind of development is suggested in Thesleff 1982: 202–207.

39 Cf. Thesleff 1982: 207; at the same time, I do not share Thesleff's contention that the narrated parts of the mixed dialogues previously existed as independent compositions; see above, Chapter 4, with n. 5.

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dialogues he replaced the impartial mediator of the *Hippias Minor* with the heavily biased one of the *Laches* and the *Gorgias*, thereby rendering all his dialogues unifocal. As a result, the narrative voice of the dramatic and the mixed dialogues, on the one hand, and of the narrated dialogues (the *Republic*) on the other, came to be treated along the same lines.

(c) At the third stage Plato abandoned the subgenre of narrated dialogue, explicitly defending the status of dramatic dialogue as a form of narrative (the *Theaetetus*). At the same time, the strategy of a single narrative voice or multiple narrative voices in unison continued to be strictly observed: the former is exemplified by the *Phaedrus*, the latter by the multi-level *Parmenides* (apparently the last narrated dialogue written by Plato)[40] and by the dramatic but still multi-level *Theaetetus*.

(d) At the fourth stage Plato abandoned the multi-level arrangement altogether. The strategy of the single narrative voice was retained, albeit modified. Plato sharply reduced the narrator's text, that is, the manifestations of narrative voice as expressed in the markers of focalization, mostly by restricting it to the dialogues' openings (the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias*). At the same time, as we shall see in the next chapter, he significantly increased the number of metanarrative comments of the characters.

Although diachronically arranged, the developments described above are not necessarily chronological, at least not before the *Theaetetus*. As we have seen more than once, Plato was in full command of his literary style. He could combine two entirely different stylistic registers in the same dialogue (the *Phaedrus*), to reproduce in the minutest detail the style and atmosphere of his early dialogues (the *Theaetetus*), or to breathe life and humor into what was supposed to be a rigorous dialectical inquiry (the *Philebus*). But the general leaning to the exclusive use of dramatic form is unmistakable, and it can only be explained as a matter of deliberate choice.

In a sense, Plato's entire literary career can be presented as a series of attempts to replace the literary form of narrated dialogue by that of dramatic dialogue – without, at the same time, abandoning the latter's identification as a form of narrative. So much so that at some stage he conceived the idea of providing the narrated dialogue with a dramatic frame, thus blurring its actual mode of presentation. This process found its ultimate expression in what looks like Plato's radical re-evaluation, or rather in a manner reminiscent of Tolstoy's

40 Cf. Rutherford 1995: 273–74: "the most obvious point is that narrated dialogues come to an end with the *Parmenides*."

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late years, outright rejection of much of his earlier literary output, which eventually resulted in his complete abandonment of narrated form.

It seems to follow from this that Plato strived to make his dialogues behave like narratives without looking like them. To achieve this purpose he abandoned the explicit narrator but kept the signals of his authority intact. It was obviously important to him that his dialogues be filtered through a single focus of perception. This key role was delegated by him to the implicit narrator.

Still, it cannot be denied that Plato's treatment of purely mimetic texts – and the dramatic dialogues are after all purely mimetic texts – as narratives is problematic in more than one respect. We cannot, however, properly address this issue until we have examined the place of the narrator, explicit or implicit, in the inner fabric of Plato's dialogues.

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CHAPTER 6

# The Limits of Authority

## 1 Preliminary Remarks

The analysis of narrative voice in the previous chapters amply demonstrates that the authority exercised by Plato's narrator primarily concerns the way the dialogue is presented to the reader: the narrator is the eyes, as it were, through which everything happening in the dialogue is perceived and cognitively absorbed. Occasional references to the narrator's ability to edit the text, stylistically and in respect of scope (Socrates in *Republic* 1, Phaedo in the *Phaedo*, Apollodorus in the *Symposium*, Euclides in the *Theaetetus*), accentuating as they do his responsibility for the form in which the narrative is delivered, also belong to the sphere of presentation. Does the authority of Plato's narrator reach beyond this sphere, to the story and the plot of the dialogue?[1]

For the "story," the answer readily suggests itself. The narrator is not responsible for the dialogue's story because it is conceived as an argument or a series of arguments raised in a conversation that is negotiated as having really occurred. Plato's narrators are invariably presented as eyewitnesses reporting real events, or as those who transmit such reports further on, so the narrator cannot be deemed responsible for the dialogue's setting, its cast of characters, or the arguments they make. For example, the party at Agathon's house and the participants' speeches can in no way be seen as invented by Aristodemus, an eyewitness, or moreover by Apollodorus, who retells the story. The influence of both narrators on the story's final form may well be considerable (above, pp. 94–96), but neither Aristodemus nor Apollodorus is envisaged as having created it *ex nihilo*.

The narrator's relation to the dialogue's plot however is a different matter. It is often taken for granted that Plato's narrator not only presents the story to the reader but also fashions the plot of the dialogue, that is, that he assumes the role of the author. This impression seems corroborated, as we have observed more than once, by Plato frequently locating the narrator's text at structurally important junctions (pp. 45–46, 75). "Frequently," however, is not the same as "regularly," a circumstance that has prevented us from regarding the strategic

1 On the terms "story" and "plot" as used in this book see n. 25 to Chapter 1 and below in this section.

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placement of the narrator's text as one of the signals of narratorial authority (p. 75). The reason will become clear once we consider that the narrator's text is by no means the only tool with which Plato's dialogues are structured, or emplotted.[2]

As I argued in Chapter 1, in the literary genre of Socratic dialogue the subject matter that is organized into the "plot" consisits of arguments rather than events: it is the arguments that constitute the dialogue's "story." In this chapter I will argue that the story is emplotted not only by means of the narrator's text, that is, the descriptions of the setting and of the characters' appearance, movements, and feelings, but also by such means as the change of interlocutor and metanarrative comments voiced by the characters. To all intents and purposes, these are Plato's plot-building tools. The systematic use of the tools in question allows him not only effectively to emplot his dialogues but also to privilege some arguments over others and thereby to guide the reader toward certain conclusions regarding the messages he intends to deliver. Let us examine them one by one.

## 2 The Narrator's Text

Narrative voice is a dimension of the text deduced from certain characteristics the text displays. These are communicated to the reader through the narrator's text embodied in what we have referred to as markers of focalization, namely, segments of text containing descriptions of the setting and of the characters' appearance, movements, and emotional responses presented by the explicit or implicit narrator.[3]

### 2.1 *The Setting*

The primary function of the narrator's text is to introduce the dialogue's setting and to draw the reader's attention to it as the dialogue proceeds (the change of setting in the dialogues' openings is discussed in the next section). The setting is normally introduced in the opening part of the dialogue. The only dialogues that do not follow this pattern are the *Meno*, where the implicit narrator draws the reader's attention to the setting only in the middle of the dialogue (pp. 59–60), the *Philebus*, in which the presence of the audience is gradually

2 On emplotment see above, Chapter 1, with n. 70.

3 Cf. Bal 1997: 36: "Description is a privileged site of focalization, and as such it has great impact on the ideological and aesthetic effect of the text."

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disclosed (p. 69), and the *Cratylus*, with its "peculiarly thin frame,"[4] whose only hint at the setting is given at the end of the dialogue (p. 59).

The role of the setting is never passive. Rather often than not its re-emergence in the body of the dialogue helps to punctuate the conversation, to mark the change of subject, to emphasize the important points. This may be done, for example, by a reference to the reaction of the audience, whose presence in the background is thereby revealed: we find this in the *Gorgias*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Protagoras*, the *Symposium*, and the *Philebus*. In such cases the audience, to borrow Plato's own metaphor, functions like the chorus in tragedy: "At these words the followers of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, of whom I spoke, like a chorus at the bidding of their director, laughed and cheered."[5] Of course not every "chorus" is as vociferous as that of the *Euthydemus*, but even the appeals to a silent audience, for example in the *Philebus*, can be used for the purpose of structuring.[6] The same effect can be achieved by going back to the dialogue's locale. This may be a palaestra (the *Lysis*, the *Charmides*, the *Theaetetus*), the Lyceum (the *Euthydemus*), a private house (the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, the *Parmenides*), the Athenian State prison (the *Crito*, the *Phaedo*), or a shady spot on the banks of the Ilissus or in the vicinity of Cnosus (the *Phaedrus*, the *Laws*). The *Phaedrus*, which is especially remarkable in this respect, deserves special attention.

The narrative of the *Phaedrus* is punctuated by two major breaks, each taking us back to the pastoral setting that frames the dialogue and creating an opportunity to close the conversation. Socrates, who has just completed a speech dedicated to rational love, decides to leave the place and to make his way back to the city. Phaedrus tries in vain to persuade him to wait until the midday heat is over. When Socrates is about to cross the Ilissus, the daemonium commands him to amend the offence against the God of Love he committed in his speech. This leads to the Palinode, Socrates' second speech (242a–243e). When that speech is over, another option for ending the dialogue arises. Still waiting for the end of the heat, Socrates and Phaedrus converse about Lysias; their conversation is accompanied by the singing of cicadas. To avoid surrendering to the vulgar pastime of an afternoon nap, Socrates proposes to spend the rest of the afternoon in conversation, supporting his suggestion with a story of the origin of the cicadas (257c–259d). This is where the discussion about speaking and writing begins; in it, Socrates comments on the three speeches delivered in the first part of the dialogue, introduces the method of collection and division, and

4 Friedländer 1964: 196.

5 *Euthyd.* 276b6–c1. On the narrator's descriptions of the audience reaction see also above, pp. 67, 90–91.

6 *Phlb.* 12b, 15bc, 16a, 19c, 20a, 23b, 28d, 29b, 67b, and above, p. 69 n. 57.

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questions the benefits of writing. By the time the discussion ends, the heat is over, and Socrates and Phaedrus leave.

The repeated introduction of the dialogue's setting effectively divides the *Phaedrus* into three sections. First, it separates the two speeches dedicated to rational love, those of Lysias and Socrates, from the Palinode, the speech of Socrates dedicated to irrational love and introducing the myth of the soul. Secondly, it separates the Palinode from the concluding discussion about speaking and writing. As a result, the Palinode is enclosed by two major breaks, an arrangement which foregrounds its position as the climax of the dialogue.[7] The *Phaedrus* is thus fully structured through its setting.[8] A similar organization of the plot by systematic re-introduction of the setting is also characteristic of the *Euthydemus*, the *Protagoras*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedo*.

### 2.2 *The Characters*

The characters in Plato's dialogues are not passive either. They come and go, hurrying to an appointment (Euthyphro in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates in the *Meno*, the *Protagoras*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Philebus*); they are about to leave but in the end are persuaded to stay (Socrates in the *Gorgias*, the *Protagoras*, the *Phaedrus*, Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1); they may become angry (Critias in the *Charmides*, Hippias in the *Hippias Maior*, Protagoras in the *Protagoras*, Callicles in the *Gorgias*, Anytus in the *Meno*, Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1) or unhappy with their own arguments (Socrates in the *Lysis*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Phaedrus*, the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*); they blush (e.g. Lysis and Charmides in the eponymous dialogues, Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus*, Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1) and laugh (*passim*).

Furthermore, the interlocutors do not just reply to questions addressed to them by the leading speaker: they are also able to challenge the protagonist, to interrupt his argument or even to redirect its course. Thus, the second part of the *Meno* opens with Socrates' proposal to enquire into the nature of virtue in order to define it; however, Meno insists on returning to his original question

7 A similar strategy of foregrounding is employed in the *Phaedo*; see above, p. 91 and below, p. 145. On the transition effected by the cicada story see Ferrari 1987: 25–34; Schenker 2006: 76. The widespread contention that the cicada episode constitutes the only major break of the *Phaedrus* follows a preconceived view of the dialogue's structure, ignoring a no less emphatic break that precedes the Palinode.

8 Cf. Ferrari 1987: 3–4: "what is particularly striking about this dialogue is that the background will not stay where it belongs. It becomes a prominent topic of discussion and a direct cause of the conversational action rather than, as one would expect, at most an indirect influence on its course." Cf. also Murley 1955: 281: "the recurrent themes of the cicadas and the stream of the outdoor setting keep the tone constant." On the *Phaedrus'* use of dramatic interludes see also Werner 2007: 116–17.

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as to whether virtue can be taught, thereby skipping the definition. The discussion veers in the direction chosen by Meno, with momentous consequences for the dialogue's argument.[9] Such navigation of the plot in a direction not envisaged by the leading speaker is also characteristic of the *Phaedo*, where the objections of Simmias and Cebes cause Socrates to expound the Theory of Forms (below, pp. 144–46).

The interlocutors' influence on the plot is especially prominent in the *Republic*. The objections of Glaucon and Adeimantus at the beginning of Book 2 re-open the discussion of justice held in Book 1;[10] Glaucon's intervention and his complaint about the "city of pigs" later in the same book (372c–373b) mark, as G.R.F. Ferrari pointed out, "a major turning-point in the work";[11] finally, the interference of Polemarchus and others at the beginning of Book 5 (quoted above, p. 36) results in a digression that spreads across Books 5–7 and proves to be the central part of the dialogue.[12]

The same or closely similar narrative devices are employed over and over. This is how, for example, Socrates' abortive attempt to end the conversation and to return to Athens is described in the *Phaedrus*:

> When I was about to cross the stream, my friend, the divine sign which usually appears to me appeared again … and I thought that I heard a voice saying in my ear that I must not go away until I had made an atonement. (242b8–c3)

This is essentially the same strategy as that used in the *Protagoras*, in the description of Socrates' abortive attempt to leave Callias' house after he and Protagoras have failed to agree on how their discussion should proceed: "Thus I spoke and was rising from my seat, when Callias seized me by the right hand

9 *Meno* 86ce. Cf. Guthrie 1975: 264: "The message is clear. The present conclusion is *not* the correct one, because Meno has made Socrates ask the wrong question" (original emphasis). Cf. also Blössner 2011: 65.

10 Cf. Schofield 2008: 63–64: "When in a sequence at the beginning of Book 2 of the dialogue running to ten Stephanus pages Glaucon restates what he takes to be an improved version of Thrasymachus' views … with Adeimantus bringing further arguments in support, the response Plato attributes to Socrates occupies the whole of the rest of the work (around 250 Stephanus pages) …" Cf. also Ferrari 2010: 12–14; Schur 2014: 88–92.

11 Ferrari 2010: 12: "[t]he need for Guardians in the ideal city can be traced back to this intervention"; see also Ferrari 2010: 14, on the intervention of Glaucon at *Resp*. 471c–473b.

12 Cf. Clay 1988: 22: "It is this interruption, unexpected by Socrates, but planned by Plato, that introduces the more difficult themes of the *Republic*." See also Ferrari 2010: 23.

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…" (335c7–8, quoted in full above, p. 83). The comparison demonstrates that in both the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedrus* Socrates' movements are described not for their own sake but to signalize a crisis and to mark the transition to the next stage of the discussion.

It follows, then, that the descriptions of the setting and of the characters' emotions and movements should not be taken, as they often are, merely as a tribute to the dialogue's mimetic form – an "embellishment," as it were.[13] They are used to introduce new arguments, to signal the transitions from one stage to another, to draw the reader's attention to the dialogue's turning points, and to emphasize its climax. They are as important in structuring the dialogue as the pronouncements relating to the argument proper.

The narrator's text is the most widespread plot-building tool employed by Plato. Explicitly or implicitly, it is present in all dialogues, and its role in laying out the dialogues' framework is indispensable. Nevertheless, the narrator's text is not the only means by which Plato's dialogues are structured.

## 3 Change of Interlocutor

The material presence of the setting and the interlocutors does not depend on the narrator and is not influenced by his perception. These are autonomous elements whose alteration can be used as a plot-building tool with or without the narrator's text. The plot-building role of the change of setting, however, is limited to the dialogue's openings, which normally consist of two stages divided by a clearly articulated spatial change: Socrates and Hippocrates meet at Socrates' house and go to the house of Callias (the *Protagoras*); Socrates and Chaerephon meet Callicles in the street and enter Callicles' house (the *Gorgias*); Socrates and Glaucon meet Polemarchus and his company in the street and go to Polemarchus' house (the *Republic*); Socrates and Phaedrus meet in the city and go outside the city walls (the *Phaedrus*); and so on. One of Plato's favorite patterns, it was meant to set the rhythm of the narrative and to direct the reader to the subject of the discussion (above, pp. 27–30, 47–49, 76–79).

The change of interlocutor is much more widely applied. In the dialogues where the protagonist has more than one interlocutor, the change of

13 For criticism of the assumption "that the literary aspects of Platonic texts are decorative and separable from philosophical content," see Michelini 2003, 3–4, 10. See also Laborderie 1978, 60–64; Johnson 1998, 577; Schur 2014: 3–40.

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interlocutor is the simplest and the most effective way to organize the argument and to punctuate its progress – or lack of it. It is regularly accompanied by a change of subject or by a transition to the next stage of the discussion. As W.K.C. Guthrie remarked apropos of the *Charmides*, the change of interlocutor is never mechanical.[14]

The interlocutors may succeed one another, like Charmides and Critias in the *Charmides*, Hermogenes and Cratylus in the *Cratylus*, Gorgias, Polus and Callicles in the *Gorgias*, or Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1, but they may also take turns, like Lysis and Menexenus in the *Lysis*, Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, or Glaucon and Adeimantus in *Republic* 2–10. In the dialogues with multiple interlocutors, other participants may temporarily replace both the protagonist and the main interlocutor. Thus, at the beginning of the *Gorgias* Chaerephon and Polus temporarily replace Socrates and Gorgias (above, pp. 66–67); in the *Euthydemus*, Ctesippus or Cleinias replace Socrates in some of the exchanges with Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, a recurrent feature that well suits the "ball-playing" atmosphere of this dialogue.[15] A similar temporary replacement of Socrates the protagonist is also attested in the pseudo-Platonic *Eryxias* (395e–396a, 396e–397c, Critias and Eryxias).

Sometimes a cameo appearance of a character who hitherto has taken no part in the conversation is used for emphasis. In the *Phaedo* the introduction of the Theory of Forms is emphasized, among other things, by the fact that Phaedo the narrator, who as yet has not spoken as a character, temporarily replaces Simmias and Cebes as Socrates' principal interlocutor;[16] in the *Theaetetus* Theodorus replaces Theaetetus when the famous Digression – presumably the climactic episode of the dialogue – is being delivered.[17] On other occasions an extra speaker emerges, whose main role is to intensify the position of one of the interlocutors or to express an opinion that would be out of character for the principal interlocutor: this is the role assumed by Ctesippus in the

14 Guthrie 1975: 168.

15 *Euthyd.* 277b3–5 "Dionysodorus took up the argument, like a ball which he caught, and had another throw at the youth"; see further *Euthyd.* 255c–277d, 286b–288a, 298b–300d.

16 *Phd.* 89b–91c and below, Section 5. Cf. Sedley 1995: 8: "He [Phaedo] is not only the narrator but also an interlocutor at one crucial point."

17 *Tht.* 172c–177c. Cf. Blondell 2002: 303: "Here Sokrates provides an inspiring synoptic vision of the place of human beings in an intellectual and moral cosmos … In this respect, the digression is comparable to an image that lies at the heart – if not exactly in the center – of the *Iliad*: the shield of Achilles in Book 18." Cf. also Rutherford 1995: 283. On the Digression and the history of its interpretation see esp. Sedley 2004: 62–81; Bartels 2015 (with bibliography).

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*Euthydemus* (above, p. 87), by Anytus in the *Meno*,[18] by Cleitophon in *Republic* 1,[19] and by Philebus in the *Philebus*.[20]

The change of interlocutor may also be staged as a violent interruption of the ongoing discussion by a bystander: this is the case of Critias in the *Charmides*, of Callicles in the *Gorgias*, of Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1; characteristically, in such cases the change of interlocutor is usually accompanied by the narrator's description of the interlocutors' feelings and actions as perceived by him (see Section 5, on clustering). Here too, the narrative strategies follow a standard pattern. Compare, for example, the following passages:

> Critias has long been showing uneasiness, for he felt that he had a reputation to maintain with Charmides and the rest of the company. He had, however, hitherto managed to restrain himself, but now he could no longer forbear. (*Chrm*. 162c1–4).
>
> Several times in the course of the discussion Thrasymachus had made an attempt to get the argument into his own hands, and had been put down by the rest of the company, who wanted to hear the end. But when Polemarchus and I had done speaking and there was a pause, he could no longer hold his peace. (*Resp*. 336b1–5)

Finally, new characters may suddenly arrive and interrupt the conversation or channel it in a different direction: the tutors of Lysis and Menexenus in the *Lysis*, Alcibiades in the *Symposium*.

In the multi-level dialogues, the transition from one narrative level to another invariably takes the form of a change of speaker. As we have seen, insofar as it is presented in the text as interplay between the dramatic frame and the framed narrative, in the dialogues of this group the change of speaker creates a clearly pronounced boundary between the frame and the framed (above, pp. 101–102). In the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo*, characters belonging to the dramatic frame intrude upon the main story, collapsing the barrier between

18 Athenian society, the principal topic of Socrates' conversation with Anytus, is not suitable for discussion with the foreigner Meno.

19 Cleitophon modifies Thrasymachus' position, in that he tries to help him by eliminating a potential ambiguity in Thrasymachus' thesis that justice is the interest of the stronger (*Resp*. 340ab). On Cleitophon's intervention see Cross and Woozley 1964: 43–46; Annas 1981: 41–42.

20 The presence and grudging rematks of Philebus make it possible to mark dogmatic hedonism as the extreme pole of the discussion yet to ignore the uncompromising position it represents. On Philebus' role in the dialogue see Davidson 2013 [1990]: 10; D. Frede 1996: 218–20; Meinwald 2008: 485.

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different narrative levels and producing ontological metalepsis;[21] the change of interlocutor by whose means metalepsis is signalized acts in these dialogues as a powerful plot-building tool.[22]

Change of interlocutor is not as widely applied as the narrator's text. It is irrelevant as regards the dialogues with a single interlocutor (the *Euthyphro*, the *Crito*, the *Ion*, the *Hippias Maior*, the *Menexenus*, the *Phaedrus*), and it is significantly reduced in dialogues whose main arguments are delivered in the course of a question-and-answer session (the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman* and, to a degree, the *Theaetetus* and the *Philebus*) or as a monologue (the *Timaeus*).

## 4 Metanarrative Comments

On numerous occasions the leading interlocutor – either Socrates or, as in the later dialogues, another character (Parmenides in the *Parmenides*, the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, Timaeus and Critias in the eponymous dialogues, the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*) – comments on the discussion, explicitly thematizing its stages and expressing his attitude to the form it has assumed. Taken together, the characters' comments on the discussion in which they take part constitute a corpus of evidence whose significance cannot be overestimated. The metanarrative character of such comments is self-evident, and the fact that Plato found it necessary to introduce them over and over indicates that he invested considerable effort in trying to help his readers navigate the dialogues.

Although often issued by the narrator's former self as a character in the story (the narrator in such cases is invariably Socrates), the metanarrative comments should not be confounded with the narrator's text. That such comments are also voiced by characters other than the narrator, namely, Parmenides, the Eleatic Stranger, or Socrates in the dialogues where he does not act as the narrator, shows unequivocally that they belong with character speech rather than with the narrator's text.

Everything about the ongoing discussion – the beginning and the end, fresh starts, digressions, the argument's length, the format it should assume – is

21 Metalepsis that affects the entire story level, see above, p. 23. On the distinction between rhetorical and ontological metalepsis see Ryan 2006: 204–11; cf. Pier 2013: 2.1 [7]; Finkelberg, forthcoming.

22 On the *Euthydemus* see above, pp. 86–87; on the *Phaedo* see above, pp. 91–92, and below, Section 5.

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open to this kind of metanarrative commentary.[23] Like the narrator's text and the change of interlocutor, these comments are as a rule placed at strategic junctions, separating arguments or punctuating the argument's progress and highlighting the turning points. Like the narrator's text again, they often follow standard patterns that recur in several dialogues. For example, the following remarks signal the beginning of an argument in the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, and the *Philebus*:

> Where shall I begin? And what shall be our first hypothesis if I am to play this laborous game? Shall I begin with myself, and with my own hypothesis …?[24]
>
> And where shall I begin the perilous argument? I think that the road which I must take is …[25]
>
> And where shall we begin this great and multifarious battle, in which such various points are at issue? Shall we begin thus?[26]

Metanarrative comments are relatively infrequent in the so-called early and middle dialogues. It is true, of course, that the *Cratylus*, in which the narrator's text is minimal and the change of interlocutor occurs only once, is entirely structured on the metanarrative comments voiced by Socrates the character.[27] But the *Cratylus* is the exception rather than the rule, for even the *Meno*, a dialogue very close to it in manner of presentation, issues a considerable portion of the narrator's text (above, pp. 59–60). In the later dialogues, on the other

23 **The beginning and the end** *Grg*. 505a–506a; *Phd*. 77c; *Resp*. 398b, 497e; *Prm*. 137ab; *Soph*. 242; *Plt*. 265b, 311b; *Phlb*.66c; *Laws* 824a, 960b; **fresh starts** *Euthyphr*. 15c; *Prt*. 318a; *Euthyd*. 275c; *Meno* 79c, e; *Phd*. 88d, 105b; *Cra*. 436e; *Prm*. 142b; *Tht*. 151d, 164c, 187a, 200a, d; *Plt*. 264b; *Phlb*. 34e; *Laws* 683e, 867c; **digressions** *Grg*. 497c; *Euthyd*. 288d; *Cra*. 437e; *Phd*. 78ab; *Resp*. 503a, 543c, 572b; *Prm*. 136e; *Tht*. 177b; *Soph*. 241c; *Plt*. 263a, c; *Phlb*. 18a; *Laws* 682e, 812a, 864c; **length and format** *Prt*. 334c–336b; *Grg*. 449bc, 451d, 465e; *Resp*. 348a, 354a, 376d, 435cd, 484a, 530e, 534a, 548c; *Tht*. 184a, 187de; *Phdr*. 271e–272b; *Soph*. 217c; *Plt*. 265ab, 277a, 286c–287a; *Phlb*. 28cd, 36d; *Laws* 583c, 887b.

24 *Prm*. 137a7–b2, spoken by Parmenides.

25 *Soph*. 242b6–8, spoken by the Eleatic Stranger. "The perilous *logos*" is the Eleatic Stranger's refutation of the thesis of Parmenides, the speaker's spiritual father (241d, 242a), that not-being does not exist. On the *Sophist* see also below, Chapter 7.

26 *Phlb*. 15d1–2, spoken by Socrates.

27 See e.g. *Cra*. 397a4–5 "And where would you have us begin, now that we have got a sort of outline of the enquiry?"; 427c9–d2 "This is my view, Hermogenes, of the truth of names; but I should like to hear what Cratylus has more to say"; 436e2 "And here let us revert to our former discussion"; 437e8–438a1 "But let us have done with this question and return to the point from which we digressed," and so on.

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hand, metanarrative comments multiply so significantly that they practically replace the narrator's text, taking on some of its functions.

*Republic* 2–10, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws* are especially rich in such comments. Their abundance should largely be attributed to the dialogues' length, which is also subject to comment in the dialogues themselves. For example, in the *Statesman*, at the point of transition from the model of weaving he has just introduced to the application of this model to the statesman, the Eleatic Stranger embarks on an explanation of the prolixity of both the previous discussion and the one to follow:

> I mainly wanted to avoid the discomfort caused by verbosity (*tēn makrologian*), of which we complained in the discussion about weaving, as well as in the one about the reversal of the universe and about the Sophist and the existence of not-being. We noticed that they were too long, and we blamed ourselves for this, fearing that they might be not only lengthy but also irrelevant (*perierga*).[28]

In Benjamin Jowett's uncharitable reading of the dialogue, "Plato apologizes for his tediousness, and acknowledges that the improvement of his audience has been his only aim in some of his digressions."[29] Yet the same issue is also addressed in similar terms in the *Republic*, the *Theaetetus*, the *Phaedrus,* the *Philebus*, and the *Laws*.[30] The issue at stake here is how far a given text can be considered relevant to the dialogue's argument (cf. *pros to prepon* at *Plt*. 286d1–2). As the Eleatic Stranger puts it later on in the same dialogue, adjusting the dialogue's length to its pleasurable effect should be considered a secondary matter (*parergon*) in a philosophical discussion.[31]

In the *Philebus*, at the point of transition to a lengthy discussion of the possibility of false pleasures (36c–42c), Socrates modifies the principle of relevance, taking it further: "the point to be considered is whether the enquiry is relevant (*prosēkonta*) … No overlong and irrelevant (*para to prosēkon*) discussion can be allowed" (*Phlb*. 36d6–10). The issue of disproportionate length that troubled Plato in the *Statesman* has thus been successfully resolved; yet, this is done not to create a pleasurable effect but again, for the sake of clarity and efficiency of

28 *Plt*. 286b7–c1; my translation. Cf. also 277a6–b6: "like sculptors who, in their too great haste, having overdone each part of their work, lose time, so too we … have taken up a marvelous lump of myth, and have been obliged to use more than was necessary (μείζονι τοῦ δέοντος)."

29 Jowett 1892: 2.

30 *Resp*. 376d, 435cd, 484a, 530e; *Tht*. 184a, 187de; *Phdr*. 272b; *Phlb*. 36d; *Laws* 887b.

31 *Plt*. 286d4–5 οὔτε γὰρ πρὸς τὴν ἡδονὴν μήκους ἁρμόττοντος οὐδὲν προσδεησόμεθα, πλὴν εἰ πάρεργόν τι. Cf. also above, p. 119.

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the argument. This is the poetics of the late dialogues in the making – the same poetics of austerity, it should be added, that was first displayed in *Republic* 3 (above, p. 119). It is pursued, among other things, by replacing the narrator's text with metanarrative comments strategically placed within the dialogues to which they refer.

## 5 Distribution and Clustering: Three Case Studies

The plot-building tools discussed above can be furher reinforced by being gathered into clusters. To obtain a fuller picture of how the narrator's text, the change of interlocutor and metanarrative comments interact in the context of a single dialogue, let us dwell at some length on three dialogues – the narrated *Lysis*, the dramatic *Gorgias*, and the mixed *Phaedo*. (The beginnings of the plot-building passages are marked with asterisks.)

### 5.1 *The Lysis*

The standard two-stage opening involves a change of scene: Socrates encounters Ctesippus and Hippothales who invite him to visit a newly founded palaestra (above, pp. 27–28). After the dialogue's setting has been established, Socrates meets his principal interlocutors, the boys Lysis and Menexenus. But as the conversation starts to evolve, Menexenus leaves the stage. "At this moment Menexenus was called away by someone who came and said that the gymnastic-master wanted him. … So he went away, and I asked Lysis some more questions" (207d1–5). Menexenus' temporary absence emphasizes the central position of Lysis in the dialogue. The conversation begins.

(1) *Socrates – Lysis* (*207d–210d*). The conversation starts in the manner characteristic of the elenctic dialogues. Socrates questions Lysis about what he understands by friendship and demonstrates that Lysis' idea of friendship is inadequate.

*At this point, Menexenus comes back. His return is staged as a lively interlude:

> In the meantime Menexenus came back and sat down in his place by Lysis; and Lysis, in a childish and affectionate manner, whispered privately in my ear, so that Menexenus should not hear: "Do, Socrates, tell Menexenus what you have been telling me." (211a1–5)

Wishing his friend to be let down as he himself was, Lysis bids Socrates question Menexenus. Ctesippus complains about their talking in secret. Socrates turns to Menexenus, and the discussion begins in earnest.

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(2) *Socrates – Menexenus* (*212a–213d*). The starting point of the discussion is the question as to whether one who is friendly disposed to another or one to whom another is friendly disposed should properly be called "friend" (*philos*). Socrates finds it impossible to decide the issue.

*The ensuing change of speaker is accompanied by a lavishly elaborated piece of the narrator's text:

> "But, o Menexenus! I said, may we not have been altogether wrong in our conclusions?" "I am sure that we have been wrong, Socrates," said Lysis. And he blushed as he spoke, the words seeming to come from his lips involuntarily, because his whole mind was taken up with the argument; there was no mistaking his attentive look while he was listening. I was pleased at the interest which was shown by Lysis, and I wanted to give Menexenus a rest, so that I turned to Lysis and said … (213d1–e1)

(3) *Socrates – Lysis* (*213e–215c*). Socrates inquires of Lysis as to the respective roles of the participants in the relationship. The first possibility, namely, that like is friendly to like, is scrutinized and rejected on the grounds that since the good man, insofar as he is good, will be sufficient unto himself, and since being self-sufficient he needs nothing, he will love nothing and thus will not be a friend to anybody.

*Menexenus interposes a remark, and subsequently takes over from Lysis.

(4) *Socrates – Menexenus* (*216a–218c*). Now, the theory that it is rather opposites that are attracted to each other is examined. In this case, however, it will be necessary to postulate absurd things, for example, that friendship is a friend of enmity, and so on. This theory does not withstand scrutiny and is rejected like the previous one. Now Socrates proposes distinguishing between three rather than two classes: – good, evil, and that which is neither good nor evil. Since it has already been proved that good cannot be a friend of good, or evil of evil, it is agreed that friendship can only exist between good and what is neither good nor evil.

*At this point, a crisis occurs:

> They both agreed and entirely assented, and for a moment I rejoiced like a huntsman just holding fast his prey. But then a most unaccountable suspicion came across me, and I felt that what we had agreed upon was untrue. I was pained, and said: "Alas! Lysis and Menexenus, I am afraid that we have been grasping at a dream (*onar*) only." (218c2–8)

Socrates expresses the suspicion that just like human impostors, they may have fallen victim to impostor arguments (218d2–4): note that the narrator's text of

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Socrates is combined here with the words of Socrates as one of the characters in the story. The narrator's effusive comments on the emotional state of his former self emphasize the transition to what can justly be seen as the dialogue's central argument.[32]

(5) *Socrates – Lysis and Menexenus* (*218d–221a*). The rest of the discussion is simultaneously held with both boys. The agreed solution fails because it requires postulating that good "is loved on account of evil by us who are intermediate between evil and good, but in itself, and for itself, it is of no use" (220d4–7). Socrates revises it to eliminate the evil, and arrives at the conclusion that both friendship and love are nothing but the desire (*epithumia*) of one who is deficient in something (221d-e); this conclusion is taken further in the doctrine of love set forth in the *Symposium*.[33]

*The transition to the last installment does not involve a change of interlocutor. Instead, it is signaled by a piece of the narrator's text with a highly charged erotic subtext. Socrates' inference that the love of a true lover should be reciprocated by his beloved delights Lysis' admirer Hippothales but embarasses the boys: "Lysis and Menexenus gave a faint assent to this, but Hippothales changed into all manner of colors with delight" (222b1–2). As Charles Kahn reminds us in his comment on this passage, an erotic advance is not supposed to be reciprocated: "when courted, a boy is expected to show indifference, even annoyance."[34] As his reaction earlier in the same passage indicates, Lysis seems to have spotted the problem even before the argument reached its conclusion: "'Yes, yes,' said Menexenus. But Lysis fell silent (*esigēsen*)" (222a4).

(6) *Socrates – Lysis and Menexenus* (*222b-d*). The interlude also introduces a new term to be discussed – "what belongs to us (*oikeion*)" (222a-b). This brings us to the last section of the dialogue. Proceeding from the assumption that the desire spoken about is a desire of something that belongs to us, we shall find ourselves postulating that like is friendly to like, thus returning to the starting point of the discussion – unless, of course, "what belongs to us" and "like" amount to two different things.

*Socrates is eager to proceed, but the boys' tutors suddenly arrive, "like some demons," and take them home.

Note that only in one case, Menexenus replacing Lysis at the end of (3), is the change of interlocutor not accompanied by the narrator's text; and only in one case, at the end of (5), is the transition from one section to another effected by the narrator's text with no change of interlocutor. In the rest, the transitions

32 Cf. Kahn 1996: 290: "the implicit positive conclusion of the *Lysis*." A closely similar reversal is also introduced, to a similar effect, in the *Phaedrus* (see above, pp. 126–27).

33 Cf. Kahn 1996: 286–90; Finkelberg 1997: 236–37.

34 Kahn 1996: 264–65.

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are signaled by the combination of these two plot-building tools. Finally, the transition to the central argument at the end of (4) is further emphasized by the addition of a metanarrative comment about impostor arguments.

The *Lysis* lucidly demonstrates the range of emplotment strategies available in the dialogues with alternating interlocutors (*Republic* 2–10 readily comes to mind in this connection). The dialogue is short (just over ten Stephanus pages), and because it comprises a single argument, its structure is relatively simple. Even so, the clustering and interplay of plot-building tools result in that the sequence of the argument's stages is not only cumulative but also incorporates culmination and reversal, thereby exhibiting the same dramatic pattern that underlies the much more complex *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*.

### 5.2 *The Gorgias*

The standard two-stage opening is only hinted at in this dialogue; nevertheless, just as in the narrated dialogues, it involves a change of scene. Socrates and Chaerephon meet Callicles in the street, and after an opening exchange (above, p. 66) enter Callicles' house where Gorgias and Polus already are found. The conversation proper opens with a preliminary discussion between Chaerephon and Polus.[35] Three major discussions follow, each involving a different interlocutor; each contributes a new turn in the argument and significantly modifies the discussion. As R.B. Rutherford has pointed out, this is a cumulative sequence:

> Essentially, the sequence is of cumulative force: each exchange is longer and more intense, even vehement; each new speaker goes further, draws Socrates out more and challenges him more profoundly; in each case Socrates reacts by rising to greater rhetorical heights, by the end adopting a form of discourse more solemn and intense than is usual for him.[36]

The *Gorgias* is the third longest dialogue in the Platonic corpus, and its plot is much more complex than that of the *Lysis*. The three major parts are divided into sections, whereas in the Socrates-Callicles exchange, the longest of the three, the division is even more ramified. The change of interlocutor, the

35 Similarly in the *Sophist*, where such a preliminary exposition of the dialogue's concerns is called *paradeigma*; see *Soph*. 218d–221c. That in his translation of the *Sophist* F.M. Cornford omitted this section altogether is symptomatic of the position according to which literary aspects of Plato's dialogues should be treated as mere embellishment (cf. n. 13 above). For criticism of Cornford's attitude to Plato's dialogues see Bloom 1991: xiv–xx.

36 Rutherford 1995: 142.

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narrator's text, metanarrative comments – all tools at Plato's disposal are employed to emplot this intricate and dramatically charged dialogue.

(1) *Socrates – Gorgias*

(1.1) The discussion between Socrates and Gorgias falls into two parts. The first, a search for the definition of rhetoric (449a–457c), ends in a crisis, and the interlocutors are ready to end the conversation.

*Chaerephon's appeal to the audience and the support he receives from Callicles (457c–458e, above, p. 67) resolve the crisis.

(1.2) The discussion resumes, now taking up the issue of the morality of rhetoric (458e–461a).

*The end of the verbal duel between Socrates and Gorgias is accompanied by a metanarrative exchange concerning the format of both the preceding and the forthcoming discussion. Socrates insists that, as with Gorgias, the conversation with Polus should proceed through questions and answers, whereas Polus prefers delivering a speech (461e–462a). This is only one of many examples of the opposition between *makrologia* and *brachulogia*, used to the same effect elsewhere in the *Gorgias* (below) and in other dialogues, first and foremost the *Protagoras*.[37]

(2) *Socrates – Polus*

(2.1) Polus replaces Gorgias, and the discussion reverts to the definition of rhetoric (461b–463e). This is Gorgias' theme, and he intervenes, requesting clarification. Socrates responds with a speech culminating in the conclusion that rhetoric is an art of flattery (464b–465d).

*Socrates' metanarrative comments on his own *makrologia* (465e–466a) signal the re-emergence of Polus and the change of subject.

(2.2) First to be discussed is Socrates' thesis that the unjust are miserable (468e–473e).

*The apparent absurdity of Socrates' conclusion makes Polus laugh, and like Chaerephon before him he appeals to the audience. Socrates reacts with a spirited diatribe against "counting the votes," adducing his recent service on the Athenian Council as an example (474a5–b1).

(2.3) The discussion resumes, leading to the paradoxical conclusion that to do wrong is worse than to suffer wrong (474c–481b).

*Callicles is appalled. He turns to Chaerephon for clarification, but Chaerephon suggests he ask Socrates instead (above, p. 68): this is how the Socrates-Callicles exchange, the longest of the three, begins. It is focused on two speeches, Callicles' "speech of Zethus" and Socrates' "speech of Amphion," which

37 *Grg*. 449bc, 465e; *Prt*. 320c, 329b, 334c-e, 335b, 336bc. See also *Hp. mi*. 373a; *Symp*. 194d; *Resp*. 348ab; *Phdr*. 271e; *Soph*. 217c.

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evoke the alternative ideals of the active and the contemplative life as exhibited in the *agōn* between Zethus and Amphion in the lost *Antiope* of Euripides.[38]

(3) *Socrates – Callicles*

(3.1) "The Speech of Zethus"[39]

(3.1.1) Callicles' speech, which opens the discussion (482c–486d), attacks the conventional approach to justice and endorses its opposite, "the justice of nature" (484b1).

*In commenting on the speech, Socrates favorably compares Callicles' outspokenness to the elusiveness of Gorgias and Polus. He finds in Callicles a suitable interlocutor for "the most beautiful enquiry," namely, "What ought a man to be, and what his pursuits, and how far is he to go – both in maturer years and in youth?" (487e9–488a2).

(3.1.2) When the subsequent discussion reaches the conclusion that pleasure is not the same as the good, Callicles loses his ground and ceases to cooperate (489a–497a).

*Gorgias interferes, and urges Callicles to proceed: "Nay, Callicles, answer, if only for our sakes: we should like to hear the arguments out."[40]

(3.1.3) The situation recurs when Socrates leads his interlocutor to the conclusion that restraint is better for the soul than intemperance. "I do not understand you, Socrates," Callicles says, "and I wish you ask someone who does …" (505c1–2).

*A series of metanarrative comments follows, in which Plato goes to great lengths to emphasize that at this point we have only arrived at the middle of the discussion.[41] Socrates sees no other way out than completing the argument on his own or leaving.[42] Gorgias interferes again to save the discussion from

38 *Grg.* 485e–486c, 506b. Cf. Taylor 1960 [1926]: 122: "Socrates and Callicles stand respectively for two antithetical ideals in life, the one for the 'life of philosophy,' the other for the 'life of action' as followed by a man of affairs in the Athenian democracy." See also Rutherford 1995: 166–68; Clay 2000: 143–45. For a detailed discussion see Nightingale 1995: 69–79.

39 *Grg.* 485e3–7 "Now I, Socrates, am very well inclined toward you, and my feeling may be compared with that of Zethus toward Amphion, in the play of Euripides … for I am disposed to say to you what Zethus said to his brother, that you, Socrates, are careless about the things of which you ought to be careful …"

40 *Grg.* 497b4–5 ἀλλ' ἀποκρίνου καὶ ἡμῶν ἕνεκα, ἵνα περανθῶσιν οἱ λόγοι.

41 *Grg.* 505c7–8, Socrates to Callicles: "Well, what shall we do then? Break off our *logos* in the middle? (μεταξὺ τὸν λόγον καταλύομεν;)"; 505c10–d2 "Well, they say that it is not right to leave even tales in the middle, but we should fit a head on them, that they may not go about headless. Give us the rest of the answers, then, that our *logos* may acquire a head (ἵνα ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος κεφαλὴν λάβῃ)"; 505d6–7 "You know, we must not leave the *logos* incomplete (μὴ γάρ τοι ἀτελῆ γε τὸν λόγον καταλίπωμεν)."

42 *Grg.* 506a6–7 "But I say this only if you think the *logos* should be carried through to the end (εἰ δοκεῖ χρῆναι διαπερανθῆναι τὸν λόγον); but if you think otherwise let us leave off and go our ways."

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ending prematurely: "I do not think, Socrates, that we ought yet to depart, but you should carry through the *logos*, and I think the others too agree with me. I myself am anxious to hear you go through what remains" (506a8–b3).[43] E.R. Dodds' comment on this episode deserves to be quoted in full:

> The interlude emphasizes the importance of the positive doctrine which Socrates is now about to establish, as Gorgias' previous intervention, at 497b4, emphasized the importance of the refutation of hedonism. It also enables Plato to get rid of Callicles for a while, and thus (a) to avoid making him to assent to propositions which we know to be against his deepest convictions (cf. on 513c5); (b) to let Socrates to present a continuous exposition of his point of view (the question-and-answer form is dropped from 507c onwards).[44]

The interlude signals the transition to a solo performance by Socrates, his "speech of Amphion," set as a counterpoise to Callicles' "speech of Zethus" (507a–509c).

(3.2) "The Speech of Amphion"[45]

(3.2.1) Although still signaling his eagerness to end the conversation,[46] Callicles is gradually drawn back into it. A discussion of the "true political art," of which Socrates claims to be the only practitioner, follows (510a–522e).

*The discussion concludes by foreshadowing Socrates' trial and death (521c-d), thus preparing the ground for the myth of afterlife. The latter is explicitly set as the final installment of the dialogue: "Since you have finished all else, you may finish this too," Callicles says to Socrates,[47] and the latter begins his story.

(3.2.2) The myth of afterlife (523a–527e).

As the summary shows, while the change of interlocutor neatly divides the dialogue into three, this overall division is further emphasized by the use of additional plot-building tools. Thus, the transition from the first to the second

43 Tr. W.D. Woodhead. Cf. *Prt.* 336e3–4, spoken by Critias: "…let us rather unite in entreating both of them not to break up the discussion in the middle (μὴ μεταξὺ διαλῦσαι τὴν συνουσίαν)." Cf. also *Prt.* 335d, 347c, 348a.

44 Dodds 1959: 331.

45 *Grg.* 506b4–6 "I myself too, Gorgias, would have liked to continue the argument with Callicles here, until I had paid him back with the speech of Amphion in reply to that of Zethus"; cf. also 485e–486c.

46 See esp. *Grg.* 510a1–2 "Granted, Socrates, so that you will only have done with the discussion (ἵνα διαπεράνῃς τὸν λόγον)."

47 *Grg.* 522e 6–7 Ἀλλ᾽ ἐπείπερ γε καὶ τἆλλα ἐπέρανας, καὶ τοῦτο πέρανον.

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part is indicated not only by Polus taking over from Gorgias but also by metanarrative comments on the discussion's format; in the transition to the third part, Polus' replacement by Callicles is accompanied by the narrator's text (Chaerephon mediates between Callicles and Socrates).

Furthermore, the three major parts are further divided into sections and sub-sections by the same means. The exchanges between Socrates and Gorgias and Socrates and Polus are punctuated by the narrator's text (Chaerephon and Polus appeal to the audience) and metanarrative comments (Socrates comments on the length of his own speech); the exchange between Socrates and Callicles is marked by the narrator's text (Callicles' withdrawal, Gorgias' intervention and appeal to the audience) and by metanarrative comments signaling the possibility of a premature conclusion of the discussion. Together, all these form a dynamic layout that wholly emplots the array of arguments displayed in the dialogue.

### 5.3 *The Phaedo*

The *Phaedo* is a mixed dialogue whose dramatic frame, Phaedo telling Echecrates about Socrates' last conversation and death, encompasses the entire narrative (above, Chapter 4). Phaedo's account of Socrates' death emplots a series of arguments for the immortality of the soul and introduces the Theory of Forms, all put into the mouth of Socrates and discussed with two alternating interlocutors, Simmias and Cebes. As in the *Lysis* and the *Gorgias*, the sequence is cumulative. To quote A.E. Taylor,

> A possible misconception which would be fatal to a real understanding of the dialogue is to look upon the members of the series of arguments for immortality as so many independent substantive "proofs," given by the author or the speaker as all having the same inherent value. Any careful study will show that they are meant to form a series of "aggressions" to the solution of the problem, each requiring and leading up to the completer answer which follows it.

Taylor also emphasizes that "Plato is careful, by skillful use of dramatic by-play and pauses in the conversation, to let us see what he regards as the critical points in the argument."[48]

The standard two-stage opening of the framed narrative that understandably does not involve a change of scene, is punctuated by modification in the cast of characters, gradually focusing our attention on Socrates and his circle.

48 Taylor 1960 [1926]: 177. Cf. also McCabe 2006: 41.

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The conversation proper starts when the last of the outsiders, Socrates' wife Xantippe, leaves the stage.[49]

Socrates has just been released from chains (59c), a circumstance clearly meant to be understood in more than one sense. The discussion proper is preceded by a general conversation focused on Socrates having spent his time in the prison composing poetry. It leads to Socrates' assertion that a true philosopher should be willing to die, although it would be unlawful for him to take his own life.

> Here he changed his position, and put his legs off the couch on to the ground, and during the rest of the conversation he remained sitting. "Why do you say," enquired Cebes, "that a man ought not to take his own life, but the philosopher will be ready to follow the dying?" (61c10–d5)

Socrates' change of position signals the beginning of the discussion. Cebes, who asked the question, will converse with him first.

(1) *Socrates – Cebes: It is unlawful to commit suicide* (*61d–63d*). Humans are the possession of gods, who are their guardians, and are not at liberty to take their own lives. Again Cebes points out the ostensible contradiction between this belief and the philosopher's willingness to die (62d).

*Simmias interferes to express his support of Cebes, and replaces him as Socrates' interlocutor. But before the Socrates-Simmias exchange begins, Socrates has to take care of what he obviously sees as a minor distraction:

> "I will do my best," replied Socrates. "But you must first let me hear what Crito wants; he has long been wishing to say something to me." "Only this, Socrates," replied Crito, "the attendant who is to give you the poison has been telling me, and he wants me to tell you, that you are not to talk much, talking, he says, increases heat, and this is apt to interfere with the action of the poison; persons who excite themselves are sometimes obliged to take a second or even a third dose." "Then," said Socrates, "let him mind his business and be prepared to give the poison twice or even thrice if necessary; that is all." (63d3–e5)

(2) *Socrates – Simmias: The philosopher lives the death* (*61d–63d*). Socrates explains that during his life the philosopher prepares himself for the moment of death, looking forward to the highest reward he will receive in the afterlife.

49 *Phd.* 60a9–b3 "And some of Crito's people led her away, crying out and beating herself, whereas Socrates, sitting up on the couch, bent and rubbed his leg, saying, as he was rubbing …"

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*Cebes intervenes, expressing his apprehension that the soul may not survive after death, and subsequently takes Simmias' place as Socrates' interlocutor.

(3) *Socrates – Cebes: The first argument for the immortality of the soul* (*69e–73a*). The argument proceeds from "an ancient doctrine" (*palaios … tis logos*) that the souls "go from hence into the other world, and returning hither, are born again from the dead" (70c5–8). Cebes accepts Socrates' argument, and remarks that Socrates' own doctrine that knowledge is recollection leads to the same conclusion.

*"'But remind me, Cebes,' said Simmias, interposing (*hupolabōn*), 'what proofs are urged in favor of this doctrine of recollection. I am not sure that at the moment I remember them'" (73a4–6).

(4) *Socrates – Simmias: The second argument for the immortality of the soul* (*73a–77c*). Since the process of acquiring knowledge can be shown to amount to recollection of what we have already known (cf. the *Meno*), our souls must have accumulated this knowledge before our birth. Simmias is satisfied with the proof insofar as the existence of the soul before birth is concerned. "But that after death the soul will continue to exist is not yet proven even to my own satisfaction" (77b1–2).

*Cebes supports the objection, claiming that only about half of what was required has been proven (77b-c). Socrates responds that the proof is already given if the two foregoing arguments are put together. Cebes laughs and asks for further reassurance: "Then, Socrates, you must argue us out of our fears (77e3–4)." He also expresses his apprehension that, when Socrates is gone, no one will be left to charm away the fear of death. Socrates disagrees, claiming that there are people in Greece and elsewhere fit to fulfill this mission. The digression ends with Cebes' call to return to the point at which they digressed (78a10–b1).

(5) *Socrates – Cebes: The third argument for the immortality of the soul* (*78a–84c*). Socrates argues that the soul is immortal because, as distinct from the body, it is akin to the unchangeable and the divine (79d–80b). This returns him to the vision of the afterlife and the philosopher's reward in it (80c–84c).

*This is followed by a pause:

> When Socrates had done speaking, for a considerable time there was silence; he himself appeared to be meditating, as most of us were, on what had been said. Only Cebes and Simmias spoke a few words to one another. And Socrates observing them asked what they thought of the argument, and whether there was anything wanting. (84c1–6)

Until now, each stage in the conversation was introduced by a change of interlocutor, and each change of interlocutor, except that between (2) and (3),

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was accompanied by the narrator's text.[50] But now, a major crisis occurs.[51] Simmias remarks that the idea of the immortality of the soul will be at variance with the doctrine that the soul is a harmony, or attunement, which dissolves after death, whereas Cebes suggests that, having "worn" many bodies, the soul may perish nevertheless (85e–88b). The transition from the first to the second objection is again punctuated by the narrator's text, which allows us to visualize the entire scene: "Socrates looked fixedly at us as his manner was, and said with a smile …" (86d5–6).

The objections of Simmias and Cebes act as a transition to the final argument for the immortality of the soul. The transition is further foregrounded (a) by frame-breaking (88d–89a, Echecrates' first interruption of Phaedo's story, quoted above, p. 91); (b) by a change of interlocutor (89b, Phaedo replaces Simmias and Cebes); (c) by the narrator's text (89bc, the description of Socrates' playing with Phaedo's hair), and (d) by a metanarrative digression on misologists, "the haters of arguments" (89d–91c), which is addressed to Phaedo.[52] This prepares the ground for Socrates' response to the objections and for the introduction of the Theory of Forms.

(6) *Socrates – Simmias: Socrates' reply to Simmias* (*91d–95a*). The doctrine that the soul is a harmony contradicts the theory of recollection, already accepted by Simmias. Asked to choose between the two, Simmias chooses the theory of recollection.

*Now Socrates turns to Cebes, recapitulating the latter's objection (95b-e). But instead of dealing with it directly, he embarks on a detailed account of his life-long search for truth. The sudden transition is marked by the narrator's text: "Socrates paused awhile, and seemed to be absorbed in reflection" (95e7–8).

(7) *Socrates – Cebes: The Theory of Forms* (*96a–102a*). Socrates' account of his intellectual biography (96a–100a) culminates in his exposition of the Theory of Forms (100b–101e).

*"'What you say is most true,' said Simmias and Cebes, both speaking at once" (102a2). This is immediately followed by yet another frame-breaking, namely, Echecrates' expression of his equally enthusiastic support (102a3–9, quoted at p. 91 above). "But what followed?" Echecrates asks, and Phaedo resumes his story. After a short digression introducing the objection of an

50 In the transition from (3) to (4), the narrator's text consists of only one word, "interposing" (*hupolabōn*).

51 Cf. Rowe 1993: 200: "the equivalent of the reversal of fortune, or *peripeteia* (Aristotle, *Poetics* Ch. 6 etc.) in a tragedy."

52 Sedley 1995: 14: "the very important methodological passage." For a similar treatment of a digression in the *Theaetetus* see above, p. 130. On the significance of digressions in Plato see Brumbauch 1988; Rutherford 1995: 283; Schur 2014: 81–98.

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anonymous bystander and again accompanied by a description of Socrates' body language,[53] the narrator arrives at the final argument for the immortality of the soul. The transition is punctuated by Socrates addressing Cebes: "At the same time, turning to Cebes, he said: 'Are you at all disconcerted, Cebes, at our friend's objection?'" (103c2–4). There is no change of interlocutor, which emphasizes the fact that the forthcoming argument for the immortality of the soul flows naturally from the Theory of Forms.

(8) *Socrates – Cebes: The fourth and the final argument for the immortality of the soul* (*103c–107a*). Soul is what makes a body alive; life is therefore the soul's essential property. It cannot admit the opposite of life, death, without ceasing being soul. The argument has reached its conclusion:

> "Then, Cebes, beyond question, the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly exist in another world!" "I am convinced, Socrates," said Cebes, "and have nothing more to object; but if my friend Simmias, or anyone else, has any further objection to make, he had better speak out …" (106e9–107a5)

*Simmias has nothing to say nor any reason for doubt, but he still feels uncertain when he thinks of the greatness of the subject and the frailty of man. Socrates agrees, remarking that insofar as one sees the initial premises (*tas … hupotheseis tas prōtas*) as sound, nothing remains but to follow the course of the argument (*logos*), "and if that be plain and clear, there will be no need for any further enquiry" (107b8–9).

(9) *Socrates – Simmias: The myth of the afterlife* (*107a–114c*). But it seems that the argument alone is nevertheless not quite enough and, as in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, the concluding *muthos* of the *Phaedo* counterbalances the preceding *logos*.[54]

*The return to the setting and the description of Socrates' death is followed by Phaedo's concluding words addressed to his narratee Echecrates (118a15–17).

•••

The most remarkable feature of the interaction of plot-building tools in a single dialogue is the dynamics of their clustering. The plot-building elements as

53 *Phd.* 103a11–b1 "Socrates inclined his head to the speaker and listened. 'I like your courage,' he said, 'in reminding us of this.'"

54 Cf. the words with which Socrates introduces the eschatological myth at the end of the *Gorgias* (Socrates to Callicles): "Give ear, then, as they say, to a very fine *logos*, which you, I suppose, will consider *muthos*, but I consider *logos*" (523a1–2).

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a rule accumulate at the point where the dialogue's main argument is to be introduced. Thus in the *Lysis*, the transition to the central argument is emphasized by the narrator's description of the emotional state of his former self, by a metanarrative comment on the unreliability of the preceding argument and by a change of interlocutor. In the *Gorgias*, the importance of Socrates' "speech of Amphion" is foregrounded by a series of metanarrative comments relating to the prospect of finishing the discussion and by the narrator's text describing Socrates' intention to leave, followed by Gorgias' intervention. The clustering is especially dense in the *Phaedo*. Here, the culminating argument of the Theory of Forms is preceded not only by the highly developed narrator's text and a digression on misologists but also by frame-breaking and the emergence of an interlocutor who previously has taken no part in the discussion. The suspense is intensified step by step, and its purpose is unmistakable: it is a carefully constructed crescendo that marks the climax of the dialogue.

Like zooming-in, clustering is a literary device attested already in Homer. As Norman Austin showed years ago, the density, length, and location of Homeric digressions stand in direct ratio to the significance of the episode they introduce: the more important the episode, the more extensive the digressions anticipating it; for example, the first encounter of the Achaean and Trojan armies at the beginning of *Iliad* 3 is foregrounded in the concluding part of *Iliad* 2 by a series of five similes (2.455–83), by an elaborate invocation of the Muses (2.484–93), and by two extended catalogues (2.494–877); the importance of Patroclus' first intervention in the course of events, which is the turning point in the poem's plot, is emphasized by an especially long reminiscence by Nestor (11.642–805), and so on.[55] Since such clusters typically signal the approach of a strategic point in the evolving plot, this must have been a narrative device that Plato's audience had no difficulty interpreting.

## 6 Conclusions

Although the authority vested in Plato's narrator is far from negligible, it does not spread to the story and the plot of the dialogue. Again, the narrator cannot be responsible for the story because it is conceived as an argument or a series of arguments made in a conversation that is presented as having really occurred. Nor can he be responsible for the plot because, as we have seen in this chapter, the narrator's text is only one of the tools by whose means the dialogue becomes emplotted. This shows unequivocally that as regards the dialogue's plot the narrator does not hold a position of authority.

55 Austin 1966; cf. Edwards 1987: 48.

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The principal contribution of Plato's narrator is his establishing a certain perspective of the events described and in communicating it to the reader. That is, the narrator is the one who focalizes the story and gives his own version of it. He is entitled to edit the story as he sees fit and to tell it in the language and style he chooses. But it is not by the narrator that the dialogue's fictional universe is fashioned. G.R.F. Ferrari's assessment of the narrative of the *Republic* further illuminates this point:

> Plato, we can begin to see, is at pains in the *Republic* to distinguish his narrative control from that of Socrates, its internal narrator. Plato is the author of a fiction on an epic scale, who must bear in mind the complex structure of the whole as he writes, and who can weave into his web not only grand themes but also smaller motifs that may recur over long intervals … The character Socrates, on the other hand, is neither relating a fiction, nor is he even engaged in artistic speech. He is presenting to an unnamed person or persons a philosophical conversation that he had the day before …[56]

The narrator is thus subordinated to an authority that lies beyond the authority at his disposal. This ultimate authority finds its expression in the strategies of emplotment, that is, the way the subject matter is organized: it is predominantly in these strategies that the authorial design becomes manifest. To quote Jean Laborderie, "It is always in the presentation, the arrangement, and the composition that the author's presence manifests itself in the most interesting manner."[57] This raises the question about the role played by the ultimate authority responsible for the dialogue as a whole.

56 Ferrari 2010: 18–19; cf. Ferrari 2010: 28–29.

57 Laborderie 1978: 364; my translation. See also ibid.: "La récurrence de procédés de style, de langue ou de composition permet de mieux saisir la place que tient la personalité de Platon dans les *Dialogues*."

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CHAPTER 7

# The Narrator and the Author

## 1 Poetry and Painting in *Republic* 10

As we have seen, in *Republic* 3 Plato classifies mimesis as a subdivision of narrative discourse (*diēgēsis*) (Chapter 1). This is not yet to say that the idea of mimesis as an autonomous category was alien to Plato. To see that, it will suffice to turn to *Republic* 10.

In the last book of the *Republic* the discussion of mimesis is resumed but taken in a different direction. While *Republic* 3 approached mimesis from the perspective of narrative voice and its manifestations in different forms of discourse (*lexis*), *Republic* 10 explores the ontological dimension of mimetic art as a whole. Besides obvious links between the two books, some notable discontinuities are also evident.[1] Thus, while in *Republic* 3 mimesis is partly accepted in the ideal state (see Chapter 1), in *Republic* 10 it is dismissed altogether, only the non-mimetic hymns to gods and praises of good men being allowed.[2] More to the point, the classification of literary genres from the standpoint of narrative voice as introduced in Book 3 is ignored, and the discussion makes a fresh start.

The renewed discussion of mimesis, which occupies the first half of *Republic* 10, rests on analogy between poetry and painting.[3] The painter (*zōgraphos*) is capable of creating everything with his art, as if he is turning a mirror round and round; his creations, however, are nothing more than appearances (*phainomena*), which stand at the third remove from reality. The painter is therefore just an imitator (*mimētēs*) of things that others make. This is precisely the position occupied by the mimetic poet (596d-597e). Furthermore, neither painters nor poets know anything about the objects of their imitation, and their creations, though deceiving the unsophisticated public, cannot be considered faithful to their originals:

1 See, e.g., Annas 1981: 335–44; Finkelberg 1998: 4–6 (with bibliography); Capuccino 2014: 55–65.

2 See esp. *Resp.* 595a5 “It [poetry] should absolutely not be admitted insofar as it is mimetic (τὸ μηδαμῇ παραδέχεσθαι αὐτῆς ὅση μιμητική).”

3 On Plato’s ambivalent attitude toward painting see Keuls 1974; Demand 1975; cf. Friedländer 1958: 119–20. For a discussion of Plato’s treatment of painting and poetry in *Republic* 10 from the standpoint of general aesthetics see Halliwell 2002: 118–47.

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> The poet is like a painter who, as we have already observed, will make a likeness of a cobbler though he understands nothing of cobbling; and his picture is good enough for those who know no more than he does, and judge only by colors and figures (*ek tōn chrōmatōn kai schēmatōn*).[4]

Finally, painting (*hē graphikē*) and poetry are equally removed not only from truth but also from reason (*phronēseōs*), in that they act on the lower, namely, the irrational, part of the soul (603a-605a). In sum, the poet is the painter's complete counterpart (*antistrophon* 605a9).

We saw that in *Republic* 3 Plato leaves no classificatory option to mimetic discourse not mediated by narrative. His placing mimetic poetry next to painting in *Republic* 10 overturns this classification. This brings us back to the view of mimesis as a non-narrative form of expression.

## 2 The Body of the Dialogue

By itself, Plato's association of poetry with painting may well be seen as part of his singularly vituperative attack against poetry in *Republic* 10 and therefore not strictly relevant to his view of his own dialogues. Yet this impression vanishes once we take a closer look both at the *Republic* itself and at the dialogues that followed it – the *Phaedrus*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, the *Philebus*, the *Laws*. References to painting, almost all of them self-referential, emerge with increasing frequency both in the second part of the *Republic* and in these later dialogues. Let us start by considering two passages from *Republic* 6:

> "No city would ever prosper unless painters using a divine pattern (*paradeigma*) drew its lines (*diagrapseian*). … Taking the city and the habits of men like a tablet, first they wipe it clean … And then, after this, wouldn't they outline (*hupograpsasthai*) the sketch (*schēma*) of the constituion?

4 *Resp.* 600e6-601a2; cf. also 597d-599a. Burnyeat 1999: 302–305, does not agree that the viewers described by Plato were indeed meant to be "deceived into thinking that the painted carpenter is a real carpenter" and offers an alternative interpretation. Yet, this is not to take into account illusionistic trends in fifth- and fourth-century BCE painting and sculpture: their cultivation of the trompe l'oeil effect was famously thematized in the anecdote of a painting contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius (Plin. *HN* 36). Plato's criticism of mimetic poetry and painting in *Republic* 10 and of mimetic sculpture in the *Sophist* (below) emerged in response to these contemporary developments. On painting see Richter 1987: 277–78; on sculpture see Pollitt 1972: 157–59, 174–78; on Plato having in mind contemporary trompe l'oeil painting see Halliwell 2002: 134–35.

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> … And then, in finishing off their work (*apergazomenoi*) they would look frequently in both directions … blending and mixing (*summeignuntes te kai kerannuntes*) the image of man from customs and usages. … And they would wipe away portions, and paint them again until they had rendered human ways as pleasing to the gods as possible." "Indeed," he said, "in no way could a fairer picture (*hē graphē*) be produced."[5]
> And of the virtues too we must behold not the outline (*hupographē*) merely, as at present – nothing short of the most finished picture (*tēn teleōtatēn apergasian*) must satisfy us. (504d6-8)

Note that terms associated with painting, such as "picture" (*graphē*), "outline" (*hupographē, hupograpsasthai*), "sketch," or "figure" (*schēma*), "blending" (*summeignuntes*) and "mixing" (*kerannuntes*) [sc. of colors], and "finishing off" (*apergasia, apegrazesthai*) – some of them the same as those used for the disparagement of mimetic art in *Republic* 10 (above, p. 150) – are simultaneously applied both to the creators of the ideal state and to the discourse about that state, that is, the dialogue itself.[6] This becomes even more obvious from the discussion of the timocratic state in Book 8, where the same terms are employed:

> Such is the origin and such the character of this State, of which we have only outlined a verbal sketch (*logōi schēma … hupograpsanta*) and not finished it off in every detail (*mē akribōs apergasasthai*), for even an outline (*ek tēs hupographēs*) is enough to discern the most just and most unjust. (548c9–d2)

Note also that, whether the picture under consideration is verbal or visual, its creation is invariably envisaged as a two-stage process. At the first stage, only a schematic outline is drawn; at the second stage, a full-fledged picture is produced by this outline being filled with colors.

5 *Resp*. 500e2-501c3. Tr. Nancy Demand, slightly adapted. Cf. also *Resp.* 600e6-601a2 (quoted in Section 1 above) and *Ti.* 37c (quoted below, p. 152). For *paradeigma* as applied to the painter's work see also *Resp.* 472d.

6 Cf. Halliwell 2002: 130, on Plato intimating that the *Republic* itself is "a kind of philosophical world-picture." At the same time, I do not share Halliwell's sweeping generalization that "philosophers are painters in another medium, in the sense that they endeavor to give vivid realization or embodiment to ideas conceived in and held before their minds" (ibid.). This would admittedly be true only of those philosophers who, like Plato, embody their ideas in literary form through the medium of artistic representation.

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The same terms and the same two-stage process re-emerge in the *Statesman*. Here, however, they are taken a step further. Somewhere around the middle of the dialogue the Eleatic Stranger announces to his audience:

> Although we may have described a sort of royal figure (*schēma*), we have not as yet accurately finished off (*ou … apeirgasmenoi… di' akribeias*) the statesman … And that is what we must do, if we do not mean to bring disgrace upon the discourse (*ton logon*) at its close. (268c5-d2)

And, several pages later:

> And our discourse (*logos*), just like some picture of a living creature (*zōion*), seems to be sufficient in broad outline (*tēn exōthen perigraphēn*), but somehow has not yet acquired the vividness (*enargeian*) which is given by dyes (*tois pharmakois*) and the blending of colors (*tēi suggkrasei tōn chrōmatōn*). Now to those endowed with higher abilities (*tois dunamenois*) any picture of a living being (*zōion*) had better be rendered by language and argument (*lexei kai logōi*) rather than by painting or any work of art (*graphēs de kai sumpasēs cheirourgias*): to the rest by works of art. (277c1-6; cf. 277ab)

The distinction drawn here between *hoi dunamenoi*, "those endowed with higher abilities," and *hoi alloi*, "the rest," correlated as it is with the levels of text addressing each of the two types of audience, is noteworthy, and we shall return to it shortly.

In the *Timaeus*, Socrates uses similar terms in referring to the version of the *Republic* that he delivered a day before:

> I should like, before proceeding further, to tell you how I feel about the State which we have described. I might compare myself to a person who, on beholding beautiful animals (*zōia kala*) either created by the painter's art (*hupo graphēs eirgasmena*) or, better still, alive but at rest, is seized with a desire of seeing them in motion or engaged in some struggle or conflict to which their forms appear suited; this is my feeling about the State which we have been describing. (19b3-c2)

This compares well with the following passage from Book 6 of the *Laws*:

> You know the endless labor which painters expend upon their pictures of living creatures (*tōn zōiōn*) – they are always putting in or taking out

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> colors, or whatever be the term that artists employ; they seem as if they would never cease arranging (*kosmousa*) their works, which are always being made brighter and more beautiful. (769a7-b3)

Yet another comparison of the process of literary composition to the process of painting can be found in the *Critias*, whose protagonist states unequivocally that "we may observe the same thing [as in painting] to happen in discourse (*kata tous logous*)" (107d5-6).[7]

In the passages cited, Plato repeatedly exploits the double meaning of the Greek noun *zōion*, which designates both a living creature and a picture of a living creature as painted by *zōgraphos*, the painter – literally "one who draws pictures of living creatures." As far as I can see, this supplies a broader context to the famous passage in the *Phaedrus*, which has come to be generally regarded as the standard definition of organic unity:

> Every composition (*logos*) ought to be formed (*sunestanai*) like a *zōion*, having a kind of body (*sōma ti*) of its own, so as not to be devoid of either a head or feet, but be provided with both middle parts and extremities, drawn (*gegrammena*) so as to fit one another and the whole. (264c2-5)

Just as in the *Timaeus* passage about "beholding *zōia kala* either created by the painter's art or, better still, alive but at rest" (above, p. 152), the *Phaedrus* use of the noun *zōion* simultaneously evokes both a living creature and a picture of it.

An explicit comparison of writing to painting emerges in another key passage of the *Phaedrus*:

> I think writing (*graphē*) has this strange feature, which makes it like painting (*zōgraphiai*). The offspring of painting stand there as if alive (*zōnta*), but if you ask them something, they preserve a quite solemn silence. Similarly with written words (*hoi logoi*)…[8]

Only words written together with knowledge in the soul of the learner know to whom they should speak and to whom they should say nothing. "You mean the discourse, living and endowed with soul (*logon… zōnta kai empsuchon*), by the man who knows (*tou eidotos*)," Phaedrus remarks, "of which the written

7 See also *Criti.* 107b-e, esp. "all that is said by any of us [about the gods] can only be mimesis and likeness (μίμησιν μὲν γὰρ δὴ καὶ ἀπεικασίαν τὰ παρὰ πάντων ἡμῶν ῥηθέντα χρεών που γενέσθαι)" (107b5-7).

8 *Phdr.* 275d4-7; tr. C.J. Rowe, slightly changed.

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one (*ho gegrammenos*) would rightly be called a kind of phantom (*eidōlon*)." "Absolutely."[9]

Clearly, the *Phaedrus* opposition of "the living discourse endowed with soul" to "the written one," which is nothing but a phantom, amounts to much the same as the *Statesman*'s distinction between "any picture of a living being rendered by language and argument" on the one hand, and a picture rendered by "any painting or work of art" on the other.[10] Moreover, in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* the verbal and the visual media address two different kinds of audience: a select few in the former case and a mass audience in the latter. Note also that, as in the case of the *zōion*, Plato plays on the double meaning of the noun *graphē*, which designates both painting and writing.

To recapitulate this part of our discussion, in the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Statesman* the dialogue is envisaged as consisting of two layers of presentation that correspond to two successive stages in the process of composition: (a) the general outline, presumably an argument drawn in words and (b) its vivid elaboration in material form, visual or written, both rendered by the term *graphē*.[11] Each of the two layers of presentation addresses a different kind of audience: the chosen ones are satisfied with "language (*lexis*) and argument (*logos*)" (the *Statesman*), or with "the living discourse (*logos*) endowed with soul" (the *Phaedrus*), whereas the rest need a "painting (*graphē*) or any work of art" (the *Statesman*) or the "phantom" of the written discourse (*graphē*) (the *Phaedrus*). The latter are of course the same people referred to disparagingly in *Republic* 10 as capable of judging the painter's work "only by colors and figures."[12]

However, the opposition of the living *logos* endowed with soul to the *eidōlon* embodied in a picture or a written text is far from Plato's last word on the

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9 *Phdr*. 276a5-b1, cf. 277a.

10 Cf. also drawing a "verbal sketch" (*schēma*) as opposed to finishing it off in detail at *Resp.* 548cd (quoted in full above, pp. 150–51).

11 Cf. *Phlb*. 39b3-7 on the mental process of creating images: "I must bespeak your favor also for another craftsman (*dēmiourgos*), who is busy at the same time in the chambers of the soul." "Who is he"? "The painter, who, after the scribe has done his work, paints in the soul images of the things which he has described (τῶν λεγομένων εἰκόνας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τούτων γράφει)." Cf. Davidson 2013 (1990): 354 with n. 22.

12 *Resp.* 601a2 ἐκ τῶν χρωμάτων δὲ καὶ σχημάτων, quoted in full above, p. 150. See also the so-called philosophical digression of the *Seventh Letter,* where Plato sets out to throw light on the part of his teaching that cannot be committed to writing because it is too dangerous for the general public and can be mastered only by those few who "are capable of discovering the truth for themselves with a little guidance" (341e2-3). This is the very part of Plato's doctrine that is defined by him as "the greatest" and "the most serious" (341b1, 344c6).

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matter. This is made clear from the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*. Towards the end of the former, Socrates addresses Protarchus:

> And now you and Philebus must tell me whether anything is still wanting in this blending (*tēi sugkrasei tautēi*),[13] for to my mind, just as some incorporeal arrangement (*kosmos tis asōmatos*), which is going to hold fair rule over a body endowed with soul (*empsuchou sōmatos*), the present discourse (*logos*) appears to have been finished off (*apeirgasthai*). (64b5-8)

The language of the passage recalls the *Republic* and the *Statesman* (see especially *apeirgasthai*). But it is a comparison with the *Phaedrus* that proves particularly rewarding. As in the *Phaedrus*, the discourse (*logos*) is treated here as incorporeal – or, more precisely, as equivalent to an "incorporeal arrangement" (presumably the mixture of knowledge and pleasure); but as distinct from the *Phaedrus*, the analogy suggests that the *logos* is now seen not as separated from the body but as governing it, apparently acting as its soul. Thus, unlike *Phaedrus* 264c, we find the entire dialogue made analogous not just to the body, but to the body and the soul united as one. This effectively supersedes the *Phaedrus*' dichotomy between "the living discourse endowed with soul," on the one hand, and the "phantom" of its material incarnation, on the other. Thus, what in the *Republic* and the *Statesman* was presented as a two-stage process of drawing the outline and its subsequent elaboration by filling it with colors, and in the *Phaedrus* and the *Statesman* again as an opposition of the verbal argument to its vivid visual or written presentation (see especially *enargeian* at *Plt*. 277c2), is treated in the *Philebus* as a unity of the soul and the body of the dialogue.[14]

It is certainly more than a mere coincidence that the *Philebus* applies the same language to the entire universe:

> And whence comes this soul, my dear Protarchus, unless the body of the universe (*to ge tou pantos sōma*), which contains elements like those in our bodies but in every way fairer, had also be endowed with soul (*empsuchon*)? (30a5-7; cf. 29e1-3, 30a3)

The *Timaeus* rendering of the process of creation by the Demiurge is set in similar terms:

13 That is, in the mixture of knowledge and pleasure arrived at in the course of the discussion.

14 It is hard to avoid the impression that Aristotle' treatment of the dramatic plot (*muthos*) as the "soul" of tragedy is a development of this specific set of ideas. See Arist. *Poet.* 1450a37-8.

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> For which reason, [when he was framing the universe] having put intelligence (*noun*) in soul, and soul in body, he was fashioning the whole in such a way that he might have finished off (*eiē … apeirgasmenos*) a work (*ergon*) which was by nature fairest and best. Wherefore, using the language of probability, we may say that this world (*kosmon*) became a living creature truly endowed with soul and mind (*zōion empsuchon ennoon te*) by the providence of God. (30b4-c1)

Further on, the Demiurge's work of "finishing off" the created universe is described:

> When the father and creator (*ho gennēsas patēr*) saw it [the created universe] moving by itself and alive, the created image (*agalma*) of the eternal gods, he rejoiced, and in his joy determined to finish it off (*apergasasthai*) so as to make it still more like the pattern (*to paradeigma*). (37c6-38a1)

The *Timaeus* passage is also closely similar to the description given in *Republic* 6 of "finishing off" (*apergazomenoi*) a verbal picture of the ideal state with the assistance of the divine *paradeigma* (above, p. 150).

In view of these smooth transitions from the fashioning of a dialogue to the fashioning of the universe and back, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that at some stage Plato came to see the dialogue as an artifact fashioned in the same way as the universe itself. As Donald Davidson put it,

> The created universe, and everything in it which belongs to the world of becoming, is for Plato a product of art, both those things which are created by man and those which are not. There is therefore nothing in the created universe which cannot be explained and analyzed in terms of an art.[15]

This of course makes the "father and creator" of the dialogue an agency analogous with the divine craftsman. The reality he fashions, however, is of a different order.

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15 Davidson 2013 (1990): 133; on the creator as craftsman in the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus* see Davidson 2013 (1990): 269–71. Cf. Halliwell 2002: 71: "In some of Plato's later writing this second perspective [mimesis as representation] is expanded by a sense that the world itself is a mimetic creation, wrought by a divine artist who, at one point in the *Timaeus* (55c6), is expressly visualized as a painter."

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## 3 The Gardens of Adonis

In the *Phaedrus*, immediately after Phaedrus' remark about the living *logos* endowed with soul, of which the written *logos* could only be a phantom (above), Plato tells a parable:

> Then tell me this: the sensible farmer who had some seeds he cared about and wanted to bear fruit – would he sow them with serious purpose during the summer in some garden of Adonis, and delight in watching it becoming beautiful within eight days, or would he do that for the sake of play (*paidias … charin*) and the festival, when he did it at all; whereas for the purposes about which he was in earnest, he should make use of the science of farming and sow them in appropriate soil, being content if what he sowed reached maturity in the eighth month?[16]

In the same way, he who has some knowledge of "good and beautiful things" will not be serious when writing them "in black water" and sowing them through a pen: "his gardens of letters (*en grammasi kēpous*) he will sow and write for the sake of play (*paidias charin*), when he does write … and he will be pleased when he watches their tender growth" (276c3-d5). Although much preferable to other forms of play (*paidia*), for example, the symposia, these writings still cannot be equated with sowing into a fitting soul, with the assistance of the art of dialectic, of "words accompanied with knowledge," that is, with the direct teacher-disciple interaction (276d5-e7). This, of course, addresses once again the hierarchy of oral and written discourse discussed in the previous section.

Nevertheless, we should not be misled by Plato's ostensibly dismissive language when he speaks of his writings. In Plato, especially in the later dialogues, the term *paidia* (whose usual translation "amusement" does it little justice) serves to designate a wide range of cultural activities, from music,[17] sports[18] and symposia[19] to liberal education[20] and human life itself. The reference to the latter deserves to be given in full:

16 *Phdr.* 276b1-8, tr. C.J. Rowe, with slight changes. "The gardens of Adonis": miniature artifical gardens produced by sowing seeds of quickly germinating plants into a basket or a bowl. Rapidly growing but short-living, they were placed on the roofs during the popular Athenian festival of the god Adonis.

17 *Lach.* 188d4; *Euthyd.* 277d9; *Resp.* 424d5, 424e6; *Plt.* 268b2; *Laws* 656c3, 657c4, 657d3, 659e4, 673c9, 673d4, 764e4, 771e6, 796b7.

18 *Laws* 796d4, 829b7, 830e5, 832d6, 834c3, 834d3.

19 *Phdr.* 276 d 6; *Laws* 666b5, 671e6, 673e8, 844d6.

20 *Euthyd.* 278b2, 278b3; *Resp*. 572c3; *Plt.*308d3; *Laws* 819b3, 819c2, 820d5.

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> I say that about serious matters (*spoudaion*) a man should be serious, and about matters which are not serious he should not; and that God is the natural and worthy object of our most serious and blessed endeavors, for man, as I said before, is designed (*memēchanēmenon*) to be a kind of plaything (*ti paignion*) of God. And this, truly considered, is the best of him; wherefore every man and woman should live their lives following this route and making their play as noble as possible (*paizonta hoti kallistas paidias*). … And what is the right way of living? We should pass our lives playing certain games (*paizonta … tinas dē paidias*) – sacrificing, singing, dancing, so as to be able to propitiate the gods…[21]

As far as I can see, the fact that culture and peaceful life in general are treated here as a kind of play (the serious activity to which it is favorably contrasted is war), provides the missing context for Plato's calling writing a variety of *paidia*, still more as several times he applies this term directly to his own dialogues or their parts. In the *Symposium*, Agathon presents his speech as a mixture of play (*paidia*) and seriousness (*spoudē*) offered to the God of Love (*Symp*. 197e7); in the *Parmenides*, Parmenides refers to his forthcoming exposition of the dialectical method as "playing a laborous *paidia*;"[22] the admixture of myth to serious discourse in the *Statesman* is also termed *paidia* (*Plt*. 268d8, 268e5); in the *Timaeus,* one's moving from the certainties of the eternal being to the probabilities of becoming is recognized as a moderate and thoughtful sort of *paidia* capable of filling one's entire lifetime;[23] finally, the conversation of three old men in the *Laws* is twice referred to as "thoughtful *paidia*."[24]

This is the background against which Plato's recurrent treatment of mimetic activities as *paidia* should be approached – so much so that in the *Sophist* he styles mimesis as the quintessential *paidia*. "And is there any more sophisticated (*technikōteron*) or refined (*chariesteron*) kind (*eidos*) of *paidia* than the mimetic one?" the Eleatic Stranger asks Theaetetus. The latter replies: "Never. For you have named here a very broad category (*eidos*) which embraces many different things."[25]

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21 *Laws* 803c2-e3.

22 *Prm.*137b2 πραγματειώδη παιδιὰν παίζειν. On the playful character of Parmenides' argument in this dialogue, already recognized as such in the Early Academy, see Zuckert 1998: 876, 894.

23 *Ti.* 59d1-2 μέτριον ἂν ἐν τῷ βίῳ παιδιὰν καὶ φρόνιμον ποιοῖτο.

24 *Laws* 685a7-8 περὶ νόμων παίζοντας παιδιὰν πρεσβυτικὴν σώφρονα; 769a1 ἡ πρεσβυτῶν ἔμφρων παιδιά.

25 *Soph*. 234b1-4; my translation. See also *Resp*. 396e2, 602b8; *Soph*. 234a6, 234a9, 235a6; *Plt.* 288c9; *Laws* 889d1; cf. *Epin.* 975d2 and Chapter 1, n. 9. Cf. Laborderie 1978: 106–7; Capra 2014: 178.

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Notably, the spheres Plato subsumes under the category of *paidia* are repeatedly treated as standing for phenomena of a secondary order: becoming in contrast to being, sports in contrast to the authentic battle experience, mimesis in contrast to reality, men in contrast to gods. It speaks volumes about Plato's attitude to polis religion that he places communal rituals, among them religious festivals and sacrifice (above, with n. 21), in the sphere of play. Nevertheless, as he emphasizes over and over, these are the very activities that please the gods. "And our virgin lady," says the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*,

> delighting in the playfulness of the dance (*tēi tēs choreias paidiai*), thought it not fit to play (*athurein*) with empty hands; she must be closed in a complete suit of armor, and in this attire go through the dance; and youths and maidens should in every respect imitate (*mimeisthai*) her, esteeming highly the favor of the Goddess, both with a view to the necessities of war, and to festive occasions.[26]

This is the background against which Plato's comparison of his writings to the Gardens of Adonis should be placed. Artificial gardens created for the celebration of a religious festival are of course only an imitation of real fields growing real crops, but they reproduce these fields on a miniature scale, and they please the god. Likewise the fashioning of the microcosm of the dialogue, which as we have seen reproduces in all particulars the fashioning of the universe. Belonging as it does to the second-order sphere of human activity, it reproduces in miniature the workings of the divine demiurge, thus creating a reality *sui generis*. The latter is made especially clear from the direction which Plato's discussion of the ontological status of mimetic art, first introduced in *Republic* 10, takes in the *Sophist*.

## 4 Mimesis and Reality

In Book 10 of the *Republic* Plato sets out to prove that any artistic representation lies at a third remove from reality. The work of fine arts should be placed first after the idea of the artifact and second after the work of the craftsman who produces the artifact; by the same token, the work of poetry should be placed first after the idea of justice and second after the activity of the king.

26 *Laws* 796b6-c4. Cf. also *Laws* 796b3, referring to military dances as "imitations" (*mimēmata*) of war.

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But did Plato really mean, as is often supposed, that the picture of a couch is an exact copy of the real couch made by the craftsman? In fact, his argument concerning the relation between the work of mimetic art and reality is not as straightforward as many are ready to admit.[27]

Judging by what Plato says in *Republic* 10, he does not think mimesis capable of producing exact replicas of its models. This holds not only for the painter who reproduces the couch made by the craftsman but also for the kind of mimesis in which the craftsman himself, reproducing the one and only idea of the couch, is involved: the work of both is only "a dim adumbration (*amudron ti*) in comparison with truth" (*Resp*. 597a10-11). The premise from which Plato proceeds in this and similar contexts is that *any* mimetic representation would involve distortion of its model, thus turning every form of reproduction into nothing more than "a dim adumbration." This would be true even of the kind of reproduction supplied by the object's reflection in a mirror: as Plato emphasized more than once, since it exchanges left for right and vice versa, the reflection in the mirror is actually a standard example of distortion of reality.[28]

The second part of Plato's argument concerns only mimetic art. Whereas a real couch is always the same, although it looks different "according as you view it from the side or the front or in any other way," the only thing that the picture of a couch is able to reproduce is this very appearance. Accordingly, such a picture is nothing more than a phantom:

> Then the mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, is the reason why it can create (*apergazetai*) everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a small part (*smikron ti*) of each object and that a phantom (*eidōlon*), as, for example, a painter, we say, will paint us a cobbler, a carpenter, and other craftsmen, though he himself has no expertness in any of these arts, but nevertheless if he were a good painter, by exhibiting at a distance his picture of a carpenter he would deceive children and foolish men, and make them believe it to be a real carpenter.[29]

No work of mimetic art can thus be regarded as an exact reproduction of the object it imitates. We should conclude therefore that no such thing as the exact copy or replica of a real thing is possible.

The argument is recapitulated and taken further on in the *Sophist.* In this dialogue, which resumes the discussion of the ontological status of mimetic

27 Finkelberg 1998, 181–91 and 2014: 153–56.
28 *Tht.* 193c; *Ti.* 46a, 71b; *Soph.* 239d.
29 *Resp.* 598b6-c4, tr. P. Shorey, with slight changes; cf. also 598a and above, with n. 4.

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art started in *Republic* 10, Plato is at pains to eliminate the claim, first presented in the *Republic*, that the mimetic artist is able "to create everything" with his art. Yet he cannot avoid the conclusion that, insofar as the objects of art cannot be envisaged as replicas of already existing things, their presence poses an ontological problem. This is especially true of sculptors or painters whose works are of colossal size:

> If they were to reproduce the true proportions of a well-made figure, as you know, the upper parts would look too small, and the lower too large, because we see the one at a distance, the other close at hand.... So artists, leaving the truth to take care of itself, do in fact put into the images they make, not the real proportions, but those that will appear beautiful.[30]

Further on in the same dialogue, Plato admits, again fully in accord with *Republic* 10, that even the images created by mirror-like imitation, namely those that do not deliberately distort their model's proportions, cannot be regarded as this model's truthful representations. The conclusion, again, is that creating the exact likeness of a given natural object is impossible.

There is thus no reality of which the "imitation" can be considered a copy. This fact turns the existence of the work of mimetic art into a real ontological puzzle:

> The truth is, my friend, that we are faced with an extremely difficult question. The "appearing" or "seeming" without really "being," and the saying of something which yet is not true – all these expressions have always been and still are deeply involved in perplexity (*aporia*). It is extremely hard, Theaetetus, to find correct terms in which one may say or think that falsehoods (*pseudē*) have a real existence, without being caught in a contradiction by the mere utterance of such words. (236e1-237a1)

Still, as these "falsehoods" cannot be regarded as representations of truth – or, in Plato's own words, as "another truth" (*talēthinon … heteron* 240a8) – they must be credited with some sort of autonomous existence. This is precisely the conclusion Plato eventually reaches in the *Sophist.* His reasoning is quite simple: since images of art cannot be regarded as copies of really existing things (and we have seen that Plato envisages no situation in which this can be possible), these images cannot be regarded as reflections of reality any more than lies can be regarded as a reflection of truth. Or, in Plato's words again,

30 *Soph.* 235e-236a, tr. F.M. Cornford.

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> …anyone who talks of false statements or false judgments as being images (*eidōla*) or likenesses (*eikones*) or copies (*mimēmata*) or semblances (*phantasmata*), or of any of the arts concerned with such things, can hardly escape becoming a laughing stock by being forced to contradict himself. (241e2-5)

Accordingly, just like the Gardens of Adonis and other kinds of cultural play, images of art can only be treated as reality of a secondary order, "a dim adumbration" containing only a small element of truth (*Resp*. 597a10-11, 598b7-8). This opens the way to Plato's negotiating the status of his own dialogues along similar lines. As we saw above in this chapter, he chose to present the reality he himself created as a series of visually imprinted images, each functioning as a microcosm, with the author playing the role of the demiurge.

## 5 Representation of Narration

Where does the narrator enter this picture? In Chapter 1 we arrived at the conclusion that since the narrative voice in Plato's dialogues never belongs to the author, all the dialogues, their narrative mode notwithstanding, should be identified as mimetic narrative, or "diegesis through mimesis," a subcategory of narrative discourse introduced in Book 3 of the *Republic*. Now, considering the direction taken by the discussion of mimesis in *Republic* 10, this definition should be adjusted and taken further.

Plato envisaged philosophical dialogue not only as a form of narrative, with narrator, story, and plot of its own, but also as a representational artifact – a picture, as it were.[31] It seems more than mere coincidence that his insistent equating writing with painting, which we saw applied in the second half of the *Republic*, in the *Phaedrus*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, the *Critias*, the *Philebus*, and the *Laws*, was paralleled by the adoption of dramatic form as his only literary medium. "I let them converse among themselves," Euclides says in the *Theaetetus* about his converting what was supposed to be a narrated dialogue into dramatic form (above, p. 5). Cicero's allusion to this passage is illuminating:

> I committed the main points of the discussion to memory, and have set them out in the present book in my own way; for I have, so to speak, brought the actors themselves on the stage in order to avoid too frequent

31 Cf. Nightingale 2004: 107, about Plato's conceiving of knowledge as involving both "saying" and "seeing."

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> repetition of "said I" and "said he," and to create the impression that they are present and speaking in person.[32]

Cicero's choice of words unambiguously indicates that in his eyes at least the outcome of the switch from narrated to dramatic form will be equivalent to transforming a piece of reported speech into a live spectacle. As we have seen, in the *Critias* Socrates already admits as much when comparing the conversation in which he acts as an implicit narrator to a theatrical performance with himself as a spectator (p. 73).

Even more remarkable is the fact that such transformation of narrative into a visual phenomenon does not make Euclides, Socrates, or indeed any other narrator portrayed by Plato disappear from the picture. Plato's insistence that the narrative act always be present in his dialogues obviously requires explanation.

Since Plato envisaged the dialogue as a kind of picture, we are entitled to ask what precisely the picture in question was supposed to represent. The simple answer would be that it was supposed to represent a philosophical conversation, something on a par with Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Socrates*, demonstrably intended as a visual representation of the *Phaedo*. What is, however, missing in David's representation of Socrates' last conversation is the narrative act by whose means this conversation is communicated in Plato's dialogue. *The Death of Socrates* is a *Phaedo* without Echecrates, which makes it signally un-Platonic.

We have indeed seen that with few exceptions Plato does not negotiate his dialogues as direct representations of philosophical conversations. The conversations depicted in Plato's dialogues are communicated to us, explicitly or implicitly, through the mediation of a narrator. Hence in Plato we encounter not a philosophical conversation as such, but a philosophical conversation filtered through the act of narration. Rather than to David's painting, it would be more appropriate to compare Plato's dialogues to Velázquez's *Spinners* (*The Fable of Arachne*), which places the producer of the tapestry representing the myth of Arachne, as well as the act of production itself, in the picture's foreground.[33]

In such multi-level dialogues as the *Parmenides*, the *Symposium*, or the *Theaetetus* we encounter a receding row of perspective-building narrators, each placed within the picture: again, Velázquez's play in the *Spinners* with a

32 Cic. *Amic.* 1.3. Tr. W.A. Falconer.

33 As distinct from the *Meninas* and other old master paintings which incorporate the figure of the painter, the *Spinners* is unique in that here the producer of the representation of the Arachne myth is not the same person as the creator of the painting.

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receding row of pictorial representations and their producers comes to mind. On the tapestry produced by the spinners Arachne shows Athena her own tapestry, which reproduces Titian's *Rape of Europa*. However, we cannot get to Titian's painting without first absorbing the interior of the workshop where the tapestry depicting the myth of Arachne is being produced; secondly we must take in the representation of the Arachne myth, of which the representation of the *Rape of Europa* is made part. Small wonder that for centuries the subject matter of Velázquez's painting was misidentified.[34]

It follows, then, that philosophical dialogue as negotiated by Plato should be approached as a representation (*mimēsis*) of perspectively organized narration (*diēgēsis*) of a philosophical conversation. What the reader of the dialogue immerses into is therefore not the fictional universe by and of itself but the fictional narrative act whereby this universe is communicated.[35]

Why was the narrator's presence so important to Plato? As we have seen, in the formula "diegesis through mimesis," which covers the entire genre of Socratic dialogue, the diegesis and the mimesis alike belong to the author. But the author, Plato, never speaks in his own voice in his dialogues. He is the creator of a fictional universe whose fullness is not communicated through the author's personified voice.[36] So if Plato insisted, as he apparently did, on presenting all his dialogues as narratives without at the same time assuming the role of their narrator, the introduction of the figure of narrator, explicit or implicit, was a required step. For Plato, therefore, the narrator was a given, the only question being how his presence is to be negotiated.

There is more than one indication in Plato's work that he was acutely aware that any representation is perspectively organized.[37] As we have seen, this was the main argument in his rejection of the claim that a mimetic representation

34 *The Spinners* had been believed to represent an everyday scene in a tapestry workshop; it was conclusively identified as *The Fable of Arachne* only in the middle of the 20th century, with the discovery of a 17th-century inventory quoting this title.

35 Cf. Schaeffer 2013: 45, on the target domain of narrative immersion in the simulation theories of fiction: "does the reader or spectator immerse into a (fictional) world, or into a narrative act depicting a world? Does narrative fiction induce immersion through mimetic primers feigning descriptive utterances, or simply through a perspectively organized mentally centered and phenomenologically saturated presentation of a universe?."

36 Cf. Rimmon-Kenan 2002 [1983]: 90: "Thus, while the narrator can only be defined circularly as the 'narrative voice' or 'speaker' of a text, the implied author is – in opposition and by definition – voiceless and silent. In this sense the implied author must be seen as a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components of the text."

37 On more general implications of this aspect of Plato's thought see Nightingale 2002. Cf. also Nightingale 2004: 111: "Plato's theoretical philosopher only attains a partial vision of the Forms and therefore does not achieve a perfect 'frontal' view."

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can faithfully reproduce reality. Thus, we saw him speaking in *Republic* 10 of the couch appearing diversely according to the angle from which it is observed, and of a picture of the couch as bound to reproduce this limitation of our perception, whereas in the *Sophist* we saw him musing about sculptors who have to falsify the proportions of human body to make the colossal statues appear proportional to the viewers.[38] More generally, we saw him claiming in the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Statesman* that the adequate interpretation of both a picture and a dialogue ultimately depends on how the individual viewer or reader is cognitively positioned.[39] This does not necessarily mean that Plato saw the single narrative perspective that he pursued in his dialogues along the same lines, only that he was aware of the nature of such phenomena and the role they play. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain why, for example, he assigns to Socrates the role of spectator even in the dialogues where, as in the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Critias*, his function as the implicit narrator is minimalized (above, pp. 70–74); or why, as we witnessed more than once, he invested so much effort in "switching off" any focus of perception different from the narrator's.

No less telling are Plato's attempts, discussed in Chapter 4, to place both the narrator and the narratee of the mixed dialogues in the fictional universe he created.[40] We saw indeed that Plato goes to great lengths to demarcate the boundaries of the fictional universe in such a way that the narrative act in its entirety may be presented as placed within it. The reason is obvious: by placing not only the narrator but also the narratee within the fictional universe, he aimed to control the way his dialogues will be read.[41] Equally remarkable is his life-long struggle, described in detail in Chapter 5, to make his fictional universe as seamless as possible by hiding the narrator behind the apparently innocent mimetic façade of dramatic dialogues, thereby rendering him as invisible as the author himself.

All these factors point unambiguously to the position assigned to the narrator in Plato's dialogues. Plato's narrator is an inseparable part of the fictional universe created by the author. Proceeding from the vantage point designed for him by the author, the narrator in turn draws a picture of his own, which assumes the form of a perspectively organized report of real events. The single narrative perspective is thus an integral component of philosophical dialogue

38 *Resp.* 598a-b; *Soph.* 235e-236a, cf. 234b. See also above, pp. 160–61.

39 *Resp.* 600e-601a; *Phdr.* 275d-e; *Plt.* 277a-c. See also above, p. 154.

40 Cf. above, Chapter 4, with n. 43.

41 This is made especially obvious in the *Euthydemus* and the *Phaedo,* see Chapter 4, with n. 42, and Collins 2012. Cf. also Chapter 5, p. 114, on the intradiegetic character of metalepsis in Plato's multi-level dialogues.

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as conceived by Plato. Everything indicates that its main purpose is unobtrusively to regulate the readers' reception and response.

This is not to say that the only thing readers of Plato's dialogues are supposed to do is follow the narrator's lead. As we have seen, Plato's dialogues are plotted in such a way that their overall design delivers a message of its own, which lies outside the narrator's authority. We have also seen that this message is not reducible to any single argument appearing in a given dialogue or to their mechanical sum.[42] As a result, Plato's readers have to work hard at putting things together for themselves. This is obviously what Plato meant us to do.

## 6 Conclusions

The complex fabric of Plato's dialogues is governed by a holistic vision of the dialogue as a quasi-living artifact – a microcosm, as it were – brought to life by the playful activity of mimetic representation. The author is the demiurge of this microcosm, he who creates a fictional universe by fashioning a plotted narrative out of the arguments he purports to set forth (Chapter 6). However, the reader can only enter this universe through the mediation of the narrator. The narrator is the dialogue's gatekeeper, a filter through whose agency it is communicated to the reader. His main function is to control how the dialogue is to be received by the reader by sustaining a certain perspective of it. There is little room for doubt about whose perspective it ultimately is. The narrator is a trusted agent of the author and the principal communication tool at his disposal. Small wonder, then, that Plato's narrators, explicit and implicit alike, are either Socrates' close associates – his friends and disciples Crito, Chaerephon, Aristodemus, Apollodorus, Phaedo, Echecrates, Euclides, Terpsion – or, above all, Socrates himself.[43]

In each of the three groups of his dialogues, Plato uses the narrator in a similar way. In the narrated dialogues, the narrator openly exercises his control over the narrative by directly transmitting his perspective to the reader by means of markers of focalization embodied in the narrator's text (Chapter 2).

42 Cf. Griswold 2002: 97–98: "The whole of the drama is greater than the parts and cannot be explained through them alone. What is not explained within the dialogue seems to show us the intentions of Plato."

43 Only three of Plato's named narrators do not belong to this category: the impartial Eudicus of the *Hippias Minor* (implicit; see further above, pp. 64, 109); the initially ignorant but eventually enthusiastic Lysimachus of the *Laches* (implicit; see above, p. 66); and the thoroughly sympathetic Pythodorus of the *Parmenides* (explicit; see pp. 41–43).

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In the dramatic dialogues the act of narration is suppressed, and the narrator becomes implicit as a result; nevertheless, his perspective is transmitted, again, through the same markers of focalization attached to one character to the exclusion of the others (Chapter 3). In the mixed dialogues, which also suppress the act of narration, the implicit narrator of the dramatic frame imposes his control on this part of the dialogue in the same way as the narrator of the dramatic dialogues, whereas the explicit narrator of the body of the dialogue controls the main narrative by the same means as the narrator of the narrated dialogues (Chapter 4).

To judge by the diachrony of the narrative voice in Plato's dialogues as discussed in Chapter 5, Plato came to see the model of implicit narrator, the one that allows the dialogue to act like a narrative without looking like one, as the optimal solution for the issue of narrative voice. Highly sophisticated as it certainly is, this solution, along with zooming-in, metalepsis, and clustering, is rooted in traditional narrative techniques attested as early as Homer. Consider the following simile, which emerges at the end of Book 8 of the *Iliad*:

> As when in the sky the stars about the moon's shining,
> are seen in all their glory, when the air has fallen to stillness,
> and all the high places of the hills are clear, and the shoulders out-jutting,
> and the deep ravines, as endless bright air spills from the heavens
> and all the stars are seen, *and the shepherd's heart rejoices*.[44]

Rather than being presented as a panoramic picture standing entirely on its own, the nocturnal landscape described in the simile is focalized and emotionally reacted upon by a shepherd: it is through the shepherd's eyes that we are supposed to view it.[45] "We should remind ourselves," Wayne C. Booth wrote in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, "that any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator."[46] The anonymous shepherd of Homer's simile is the implicit narrator of the moment of stillness of nature that he beholds. At the same time, he is himself part of the picture drawn by the author. This is precisely how Plato's narrator is positioned.

44 *Il.* 8.555–59, tr. R. Lattimore, slightly adapted; my emphasis.

45 Cf. de Jong 1987: 134: "the position the N[arrator]F[ocalizer]1 chooses is that of the shepherd." *Il.* 8.555–59 is far from being the only example of this kind, cf. *Il.* 13.493–94, 21.346–47; *Od.* 6.102–106, 22.302–306, with Kirk 1990: 341: "the herdsman's reaction is typical."

46 Booth 1983: 164.

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